

Situation, Education and Activation of Elderly People in Europe

**edited by
Małgorzata Stawiak-Ososińska
and Sławomir Chrost**

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Introduction

Over the last few years ageing of societies has become an increasingly mass and progressing phenomenon. At present it affects human population on all continents and in all countries worldwide. It is a direct effect of huge progress of medical sciences, good organization of social life as well as increased concern for the elderly resulting from ethical reasons and expressed, for example, in setting up specialist institutions and centres providing a widely understood help and support to the elderly.

Conscious withdrawal of senior citizens from professional, public and social activity unfortunately contributes more and more often to the situation where many of them become pushed onto the margins of regular social life. Numerous barriers of technical and technological nature, limiting the possibility to undertake paid work after retirement, worsening health condition, decrease of physical fitness and sometimes also limiting of intellectual possibilities cause that elderly people, who used to be professionally active, feel unwanted and even rejected. The feeling of exclusion among many seniors is increased when they spend the autumn of their life on their own, far from their working children, grandchildren, and other relatives. Therefore, the society is facing a challenge to prevent negative, psychological effects of ageing. One needs to take care of the fact that the elderly are not discriminated in any spheres of social functioning and that they have an equal access to material goods (decent retirement and disability pensions), to cultural goods, social protection, health care, education, legal protection and, as far as possible, to labour market.

Numerous actions are undertaken towards this. The present stereotype of an elderly person perceived as a lonely and poor person has already been changed. It is giving way to an image of an active, life-curious person and consumer who wants to satisfy his/her sophisticated needs with various goods and services. The senior citizen is also perceived as an important recipient of various kinds of business, recreational, educational, cultural, medical, tourist, etc. offers. The possibilities to use these offers in different European countries are different. They depend most of all on the level of retirement benefits or possible other, additional income, health condition, age, level of mature children's independence and standing on their own feet, and even on grandchildren's financial condition. In all countries, people who receive high retirement benefits, enjoy good health, undertake some kind of work, have not become a widow or have not lost their husband and have children standing on their own feet who are financially independent are in the best situation. Those seniors perceive their age not as a limitation, but a continuation of a good and affluent life. They are also fully benefiting from comfortable life, travel widely, go to the theatre or the cinema, etc. regularly. They are socially active and want to play important social roles. They adapt quickly to a new situation connected with retirement.

A significantly more difficult is a situation of the elderly who have low income, an increasingly worsening health condition, left on their own, coping with many existential dilemmas.

The European Union notices problems affecting the elderly and undertakes numerous actions aiming at helping this age group of the modern society. In searching for optimum way of coping with various problems affecting this age group various projects have been launched recently in order to find best solutions contributing to raising the life standard of modern Europeans who are in the autumn of their life¹. Research on life, health and economic situation as well as the senior citizens' needs is carried out in all European countries. Specialists in various disciplines of science express their opinions on that issue. This publication also inscribes into these trends.

The present work constitutes a collection of interdisciplinary deliberations of scientists from various European countries on old age and ageing. It includes thirty texts oscillating between two important issues – the seniors' situation and promoting their active living. All texts have been grouped into three similar content-wise chapters. The first chapter includes eleven articles depicting what the situation of elderly people in society was in the past and is right now. The chapter starts with Sławomir Chrost's text referring in its meaning to the perception of an elderly person in the Bible, being the source of Christian culture as well as a point of departure to an attitude to another person. The author, by analysing the books of Old and New Testament shows that the old age is associated most of all with wisdom, power and God's blessing, it is treated most of all as "successful time", and its experiencing as a way to eternal happiness. The next text written by Małgorzata Stawiak-Ososińska is an attempt to present the situation of the elderly in Poland over centuries. As appears from the author's deliberations the fate of the elderly has never been particularly easy. They have always coped with rejection, health problems, disrespect and loneliness. Better fortune was only for those who had secured their living for the old age or those who did not let to be pushed onto the family and social life margin. Ewa Kula's article is similar topic-wise to this text. The author depicts how life of retired secondary school teachers looked like in the Kingdom of Poland (19th century). Other texts are dedicated to the present situation of the elderly people in various countries. Wioletta Szumilas-Praszek shows the attitude of young generation to the elderly that is influenced by the media and the existing economic and social situation of the country. Their own children often perceive an elderly person, as a free nanny and a "bank" of immediate financial help. From this perspective, the majority of respondents view the old age as difficult time branded

1 One of such projects is presently carried out by EduCare (Lifelong learning program, Agreement number (2012 - 3762 / 001 - 001), Project number (527360-llp-1-2012-1-IT-GRUNDTVIG-GMP). The EduCare project's innovative character lies in the areas of communication-relationship of the elderly on the side of trainees' trainers. EduCare highlights coaching as a key activity, thus giving more weight to communication skills and interpersonal and management of contextual difference, altering the current provisions of the national standard modules. Active ageing requires new skilled caregivers with enhanced personal qualities and abilities, and requires reference figures capable of providing the family with assistance after their training with daily help when handling critical situation.

with lack of financial means and a poor understanding of their problems by their closest ones. A similar meaning has Lidia Domańska's article, dedicated to the senior citizens' situation on the labour market in Poland. Many elderly people are being dismissed and perceived as inadequate workers. As the author claims, in comparison with other European countries Poland has the lowest employment rate of people over 55 years old. This phenomenon applies mostly to women who, having lost their job, have usually no perspectives for further employment. Claudio Cortese and Gianluca Biggio have based their deliberations on research carried out among senior Italian workers. It concerned their feeling at their workplace. As appears from their research, atmosphere created by the management and co-workers influences one's feelings while performing their professional duties. Feeling of professional usefulness causes that many workers are more productive and less stressed. Teresa Chmiel has made some interesting observations on the life situation of Polish senior citizens in her text. She has emphasised that through fast speed of life regular family relations have been disturbed, the seniors are put on the sidelines. However, what is comforting is the fact that not all environments have been influenced by the pursuit of success. In small towns, there are still extended families in which the senior is a full member of everyday life and is not influenced by the negative effects of getting old, such as is the case among the seniors living in big city agglomerations. Aldona Molesztak and Magdalena Zajac have brought up a similar issue. They have carried out research on the feeling of satisfaction among the students of University of the Third Age, club for senior citizens of the Polish Teachers' Association as well as residents of a village. Results appearing from it confirm the present findings. The majority of the seniors is plagued by and finds a very low retirement pension and increasingly deteriorating material status disturbing in experiencing life satisfaction. Still, the possibility of active spending of free time with their peers (especially among people with higher education), self-accomplishment contributes to a bigger and better experiencing of old age and increase of the feeling of social usefulness and, as a result, life satisfaction. The next chapter is dedicated to the situation of present seniors in France. Nicole Battaglia and Aleksandra Provost have described actions undertaken by the state to activate healthy citizens (a wide offer of spending their free time) as well as ways of financial and welfare security in case of people who are not able to exist on their own (the majority of French citizens over 75 years old lives in nursing homes, and those who are at home have been ensured support in everyday functioning). Also citizens in Belorussia enjoy some interest from the state. Michał Straczuk writes about actions undertaken by the government for the oldest members of the society, but he emphasises that quite often not all the needs are satisfied. Attempts to cope with this inadequacy have been undertaken by non-governmental organizations, which provide various kinds of social services. Marija Oliynik writes about retired teachers' needs. According to the author, the process of personal development does not end in the period of old age. For numerous teachers, who have ended their professional activity, work, interpersonal communication, aiming at self-realization are still of enormous importance. This chapter is ended by Agata Chabior's article. The author spins

theoretical deliberations on the influence of disease, process of dying and death on the life of the elderly and their families. The senior's physical disability and disease have an enormous influence on regular functioning of a family, and dying and death leave a mark on psyche of all who have to come close to these processes.

It is widely believed that the quality of life, subjectively perceived by the elderly, to a significant extent depends on the level of life activeness, understood as a series of various kinds of activities undertaken by people on various planes of their functioning (active participation in family, social, public and professional life, realization of interests and passions). When it comes to the elderly, due to their progressing disability, relatively low income, psychological barriers, the feeling of lack of acceptance from the environment, they are subject to social isolation and numerous limitations in everyday functioning. According to many scientists whose deliberations are included in the following two chapters, one can effectively prevent exclusion by creating, interesting and adapted to the seniors' possibilities and needs, offers of spending their free time.

The authors of the texts in the second chapter write about educational offers aimed at the elderly. Deliberations on this topic are opened by Ludmiła Tymczuk's article, who has presented the role of trainings and courses for adults in eradication of illiteracy in the Ukraine in the 19th and 20th century. The next, collective text of Moscow scientists is dedicated to gerontological education trends in Russia. They write that the present educational offers for the senior citizens are implemented in four areas: acquiring new skills, stimulating and developing of artistic expression, learning to operate modern machines and computers and a widely understood lifelong education. Then, two following texts have a slightly different overtone. The authors have emphasised in them the role of inter-generation contacts in acquiring new skills and shaping attitudes. According to Edward Szkoda, contacts with grandchildren are in this respect of enormous importance. Children are always emotionally very close to their grandparents and are happy to spend time with them, and by introducing and using modern tools and toys they teach the seniors how to use numerous devices. Anna Leszczyńska-Rejchert's article touches upon a similar topic. According to her, benefits from taking part in inter-generation education are derived not only by the grandparents but by the grandchildren as well. In the author's opinion inter-generation education contributes to a change of negative stereotypes on various age groups, it promotes a positive image of people belonging to various generations, shapes positive attitudes towards people of all age, promotes perceiving various phases of life as natural stages of human existence, prevents social exclusion, supports independence among people in all ages. Educational-activating institutions are the worldwide-known Universities of the Third Age. More and more people, after their retirement, want to become students of these universities. Elżbieta Trafiałek's text is dedicated to the Universities of the Third Age. The author writes that in Europe the Universities of the Third Age are treated as institutions beneficial to the whole society. Thanks to their vast offer they contribute to creating a new life style among their students, elimination of the feeling of social isolation, improvement of social relations,

acquiring new competence and experience. Then, an article written by Adam Zych, touches upon an extremely important issue of the selection of students of the Universities of the Third Age. The author pays attention to an extremely important issue of selecting the elderly people as the Universities of the Third Age students. He writes that the universities originally supposed to be open to all recipients have turned into feminized, elite places whose only pass can be the candidate's education. What is a prerequisite in the modern world is the ability of good computer knowledge. Many seniors, especially the elderly ones, are not using these technologies due to difficulties connected with the equipment construction and unsuitable software. Ryszard Błaszkiwicz, pays attention to this very issue in his text. He claims that the seniors would find it easier to be active on the Internet if producers thought about creating special tools just for this age group. He presents ELDY, an interesting software, which after being installed on a regular computer, allows fast learning of this device basics, does not require performing complicated operations, and thanks to only six keys it allows for an efficient use of electronic mail, creating documents, browsing photos, talking via Skype, chatting. Robert Vardisio has described an interesting proposition to all of the people who can operate computer technologies. S.IN.A.P.S.I e-learning education model is aimed at professionally active people who, due to their age, have to constantly improve their knowledge. Thanks to that module, without too much effort, they can always be up-to-date. Operating computer may have not only the educational aspect. Computer technology may be implemented also in order to improve the quality of life of the elderly people. Such possibilities are described in a collective article of Spanish psychologists who have invented a so-called Butler System based on using the Internet as a technology enabling a fast contact between the carer – an elderly person – friend in order to carry out diagnostic research of the senior, his/her therapy and organizing free time. The only ability the charges wanting to take part in this system need to have is the ability to operate a computer. One of this system's assets is the ability of a fast "control" over the charges (for example, thanks to this one can detect depression states early, can ease the feeling of loneliness). Acquiring new skills does not always have to be connected with sitting at the computer or in a classroom. An intriguing offer for the seniors based on discovering the world by tourism has been created by Elderhostel – an American organization aimed at tourist activation of the senior citizens. Its educational offer is very interesting. Qualified specialists carry out classes for the students in a non-formal way, in various places of the world, for groups of a similar age bracket. Numerous adventures are accompanied by atmosphere of discovery and adventure. At present, Elderhostel organizes national and international trips connected with experiencing other countries and cultures which is not only visual, but also culinary, cultural, research. This interesting (but also expensive) educational form has been introduced by Marlena Kilian.

The last chapter oscillates thematically between the ways of promoting active living among the senior citizens. It is opened by a text written by Zofia Szarota who presents main directions of world and European social policy towards old age and ageing as well as their exemplifications in the region of Lesser Poland. At

present in Poland numerous projects and programmes are implemented aiming at promoting active living of the elderly. A review of these initiatives has been made by Renata Miszczuk. Monika Wojtkowiak and Katarzyna Potaczała-Perz have paid attention to a slightly different aspect. They believe that there is a rational need of developing consultancy for the seniors aiming at helping to adapt to a new situation after retirement, showing possibilities of spending free time and self-realization. Two further articles include some important reference to triggering creative activity among the senior citizens. Larysa Mishykla has dedicated her text to the need of human creative development, which does not cease with age, but evolves and becomes even stronger. She has emphasised that it is an important element of each individual's life. Still, its satisfaction, especially among elderly people, is not always met with understanding by the society. According to her, in order to change this attitude one should first of all prepare appropriately social workers and geropsychologists to working with the seniors so they could cooperate with and inspire the elderly people with their creative activity. Then, Irena Pufal-Struzik has clearly emphasised in her text that many seniors find it difficult to find themselves in the present world. These people are overwhelmed by the vastness of information and knowledge and the omnipresent hurry only contributes to the occurrence of mental problems, depression and feeling of isolation. According to the author, a way to avoid numerous problems can be developing in the seniors a so-called creative attitude to life whose external manifestation will be the feeling of functionality, self-acceptance, autonomy, creative managing of everyday life and level of interaction with other people. Another recipe for preventing social exclusion is given by Olesja Koropetska. According to her, a lot depends on psychological motivation of a given senior person. The author puts emphasis on aspiring to self-realization of people of all ages. She writes that in all age, and especially in the old age, people should not give up on their dreams and interests and should live actively and efficiently. Self-realization can take place in various forms and places. Often the fact whether a person can see something for him/herself is not in the lack of offer aimed at him/her but his/her attitude to reality. Time of the autumn of one's life is often time of coming back to the past and retrospection of the most important events. According to Joanna Wawrzyniak and Kamila Lasocińska using this natural tendency is a perfect way to rediscover oneself anew. The researchers have created and described their original project of biography workshops for the seniors, aiming at reconstructing their private course of life, creative look at their own biography, rediscovering their own potential, creative judgement of most important life events, and finally inspiring to change an attitude to one's own life experience. A totally different overtone has Sławomir Grzesiak's article that has put emphasis on the situation of prisoners over 65 years old. Work procedures in prisons do not take into account the age of condemned people. Nobody pays attention to bio-psychological, health and social needs of elderly prisoners and they are actually excluded from activities carried out in penal institutions. He points out that there is a need to work out a model of working with the elderly prisoners, which so far nobody has undertaken.

The scale of issues discussed in the present publication proves that old age and getting old can be perceived from various perspectives. Many authors clearly indicate the need of constant updating of the offer of activation and education activities and an even wider interest in the senior citizens' fate so as the elderly people are not excluded but present in the family, social, professional, cultural and public life. However, noticing the elderly people's problems by the present society will be possible only when this problem is given more attention in mass media. A deep understanding of the issue of the problem which is old age will allow creating basis for human community based on a deep understanding of social justice, equality, solidarity, right to decent life in all its stages. With this belief we present this publication to you.

Małgorzata Stawiak- Ososińska

**SITUATION OF ELDERLY PEOPLE
IN POLAND AND EUROPE**

Senescence Rooted in the Bible

Introduction

The reflection on getting older and senescence has been a part of human's thought ever since people started to self-reflect and rethink their lives and beings, thus from the very beginning. Such an attitude found its use in philosophical views or religious doctrines. From the ancient times people had difficulties with defining the old age in an unambiguous way. Most of them saw its equivocality. On the one hand it was presented as the crowning of elderliness, binding it with gaining wisdom. On the other, however, elderliness was represented as the end of life interlinked with problems of the age, its illnesses and limitations. Aristotle combined senescence with everything that is difficult and unpleasant. Plato, however, emphasized the beauty and goodness in the old age.

To positive aspects of elderliness include an ability to collect the fruits of one's life, command a lot of free time and the Liberty to choose one's activities as well as the wisdom that comes with the age are included. The old age is a natural time of summing up, which allows to rejoice at achievements on the family, professional and social field. The life wisdom tied with knowledge and experience, profound piety and personal features such as prudence, the depth of judgment, distance towards life, empathy, understanding, patience and sensitivity, enables to pass on (especially to the young generations) certain values as also family, religious and patriotic traditions.

Among the cons of senescence some difficulties can be mentioned, like aggravating health issues, deteriorating psychophysical efficiency, difficulties with accepting a diverse life situation (loneliness – the loss of a spouse or children, retirement, etc.) or inevitable death.

The duality in comprehending elderliness and getting older transfers itself into stereotypes. Clichés exist also in perceiving the elderly, which in turns can consequently affect the relation of the general society to this group. Where the elderly are seen as kind, cheerful, worthy of trust, influential, acknowledged and respected the acceptance of the seniors is much easier, as well as recognizing their rights to be active or designating them new areas of social functioning. However, where they are viewed as inflexible, slow moving, old fashioned, naive, not self-reliant, abrasive, being a burden for family and country a negative approach towards this group is much more common and can be expressed in

all sorts of discrimination, social exclusion, deprivation of the right to access medical service or participation in socio-political life.

According to the „Nowy leksykon biblijny” (2011:694), the question of elderliness in the Bible is defined by/in two aspects – positive and negative; simultaneously declaring that the positive prevails. Surely old age deserves respect even if vitality is slowly abandoning the body. Despite all the hardships, senescence is shown as a desired gift from God. As an example of a graceful, old and wise man, “Nowy leksykon biblijny” puts Simeon and his prayer (Lucas 2:25-32). Due to the life experience gathered throughout the years, the elderly are required to show what piety truly means.

However, Leon-Dufor (1985:906) interprets senescence in a less graceful way. It states that if old age is a time rich in wisdom and experience it can also become a burden for the one who has advanced in years. Depending on the way of portraying, elderliness can be a way to death or a path leading to eternal happiness (Leon-Dufor, 1985: 906).

A road to death

The Holy Scripture warns, that senescence can be a burdensome time. It is intertwined with difficulties and sufferings. According to The Bible the basic threat for elderliness, however, is closing oneself to novelty of the truth coming from God. This makes old age useless and leads to a hostile attitude towards Christ. As is stated in The Bible, the old people are endangered by blocking themselves to all kinds of recentness instead of opening to the truth. That way the false faith in tradition (“Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” Matthew 15:6) led the elderly of the nation to support the numbers of enemies of Christ, who they insultingly put on the cross (“Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people made their plans how to have Jesus executed. (...) In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him” Matthew 27:1.41-42).

Biblical authors notice the negative sides of senescence. Those are illnesses, feeling of loneliness, physical weakness, loss of connection with the reality. With great difficulty moving descriptions of the old age can be found in the world literature, as opposed to The Bible. Elderliness can be a time of misery and sorrow (“...my gray head down to the grave in sorrow” Genesis 42, 38; 44, 29). An old man loses his physical strengths and his intellect grows weaker (“Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age” Zechariah 8:4), as well as his sight (“Now Israel’s eyes were failing because of old age, and he could hardly see” Genesis 48:10), and other senses (“I am now eighty years old. Can I tell the difference between what is enjoyable and what is not? Can your servant taste what he eats and drinks? Can I still hear the voices of male and female singers? Why should your servant be an added burden to my lord the king?” 2 Samuel 19:35).

Thus, an old man turns his prayer to God: "Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone" (Ps 71:9). Through the lips of the prophet, Isaiah assures: "Even to your old age and gray hairs, I am he, I am he who will sustain you" (Isaiah 46:4).

The Bible also acknowledges, that not every old man has to be a personification of virtues and wisdom. Unfortunately, in the old age all the sins and weaknesses accumulated during the whole life become prominent, hidden desires come to light and egoism is reborn. Instead of being an example of piety and honesty for the young, old people can become the reason of outrage. Hence, they deserve a rigid damnation: „Three sorts of men my soul hateth, and I am greatly offended at their life: a poor man that is proud, a rich man that is a liar, and an old adulterer that doateth" (The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach 25:2). The book of Daniel mentions: „And there were two of the ancients of the people appointed judges that year, of whom the Lord said: Iniquity came out from Babylon from the ancient judges, that seemed to govern the people (Dn 13,5). These old men were trying to convince an innocent girl, Zuzanna, to sin and when she resisted, they perversely accused her. „And the old men saw her going in every day, and walking: and they were inflamed with lust towards her: And they perverted their own mind and turned away their eyes that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgments. So they were both wounded with the love of her" (Dn 13, 8-10).

Time of the old age is not idealized in The Bible. The Holy Scripture portrays problems which aged people have to face. Those are not only health issues: "But Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were glazed by reason of his age" (1 Kings 14:4); but also lack of support or mental disability: "My son, help thy father in his age, and grieve him not as long as he liveth. And if his understanding fail, have patience with him; and despise him not when thou art in thy full strength" (The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach 3:12-13).

It happens that death is seen as liberation („O death, acceptable is thy sentence unto the needy, and unto him whose strength faileth, that is now in the last age, and is vexed with all things, and to him that despaireth, and hath lost patience!" The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach 41:2), when an old man feels that his life force abandons him ("Remember your Creator in the days of your youth before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them" Ecclesiastes 12:1).

A pathway to eternal happiness

First of all, The Holy Scripture shows senescence as a positive aspect, a gift from God being a prize for a good life. A man can cherish his past among the goods he has amassed and fulfill his life. Old age in the Bible is connected with the time of using gathered experience, and a period of progress in wisdom. „Much experience is the crown of old men, and the fear of God is their glory" (The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach 25:6). That is why in the Bible aged people are treated with respect as witnesses of tradition and depositaries of God's

blessing for next generations. It is often that the elderly (Wise Men) guide God's People. The Bible also presents senescence as a pathway to eternal happiness or as a symbol of eternity and God's feature. That is why the death of a man in his age bears great dignity in itself.

The Bible praises aging in general. On the one hand it is identified with wisdom („O how comely a thing is judgment for gray hairs, and for ancient men to know counsel!" (The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach 25:4), however, on the other – with power. After all the elderly presided over the Israeli nation in times before and after Christ. (Exodus 18, 12; 2; Ezra 6:7; Acts 11:30; „When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders" Acts 15:4a). In the Bible God promises a long life to those who do justice and have respect for their parents. The Fourth Commandment states: "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12). A similar view is presented in the Book of Sirach: "He that honoureth his father shall have a long life" (The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach 3:6). Likewise, worth remembering are the proverbs from the Book of Proverbs: "The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short" (Proverbs 10:27) as also "Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31). According to the Bible, the elderly deserve respect and are to be treated with dignity: "Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:32); „Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father" (1 Timothy 5:1).

The Holy Scripture glorifies old age in three dimensions. It identifies it with wisdom and power, as also considers it to be a blessing of God. In the Bible the elderly are the ones who lead the community. God sends Moses to the elderly of Israel ("Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt'" Exodus 3:16). David, who was an anointed of God, also had to make an alliance with the elderly of the folk ("When all the elders of Israel had come to King David at Hebron, the king made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel" 2 Samuel 5:3). The Sanhedrin – as the council of the elderly – also exercises control and makes the most important decisions, like the one to kill Jesus Christ ("Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they schemed to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him" Matthew 26:3,4). The Holy Scripture presents long life as a mark of God's blessing. In the times of patriarchs people lived for 100 years: "Noah lived a total of 950 years, and then he died" (Genesis 9:29); "Two years after the flood, when Shem was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. And after he became the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters. When Arphaxad had lived 35 years, he became the father of Shelah. And after he became the father of Shelah, Arphaxad lived 403 years and had other sons and daughters. When Shelah had lived 30 years, he became the father of Eber. And after he became the father of Eber, Shelah lived 403 years and had

other sons and daughters. When Eber had lived 34 years, he became the father of Peleg. And after he became the father of Peleg, Eber lived 430 years and had other sons and daughters. When Peleg had lived 30 years, he became the father of Reu. And after he became the father of Reu, Peleg lived 209 years and had other sons and daughters. When Reu had lived 32 years, he became the father of Serug. And after he became the father of Serug, Reu lived 207 years and had other sons and daughters. When Serug had lived 30 years, he became the father of Nahor. And after he became the father of Nahor, Serug lived 200 years and had other sons and daughters. When Nahor had lived 29 years, he became the father of Terah. And after he became the father of Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and had other sons and daughters. After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran" (Genesis 11:10b-26.32); "Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. She died at Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan" (Genesis 23:1-2); "Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people" (Genesis 25:7-8); "Isaac lived a hundred and eighty years. Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him" (Genesis 35:28-29). Bible studies, nowadays, make a stand that those numbers are to be treated symbolically, as an image of God's blessing and a life in friendship with The Lord. Surely, they are not to be treated literally.

In a very positive way The Holy Scripture describes elderliness of believers. "(...) planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green" (Psalms 92: 13-14). The one who believes does not have to worry about what will happen to him when old age comes, as God shall never abandon him. "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come" (Psalms 71:18).

In the light of biblical terminology and teachings senescence appears as "a successful time", in which gauge of human's life is fulfilled – in accordance with God's plan for every man on Earth. It is a time, when everything cooperates so that one can apprehend the meaning of life and gain "the wisdom of heart". "For honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor that is measured by number of years. But wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age" – as we read in The Book of Wisdom (4:8-9). The old age is the final stage on human's path to growth and a sign of God's blessing.

Edifying examples

In the Old Testament as well as in the New one, we can find life stories of the elderly, who can pose as examples for younger generations. Among such "constructive examples" are: Abraham, Moses, Eleazar, Simeon and Anna.

The Bible portrays Abraham (Genesis 12:1-25,8) as a type and representative of a man appointed by God (Genesis 12:1-3). Having faith in God, a seventy five year old Abraham (Genesis 12:4) set out on a journey. There was nothing

constant or certain on his way. Together with Abraham all of the believers went to "the promised land", which lies beyond any visible horizon. "You, however, will go to your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age" (Genesis 15:15).

Moses, first of all, is the great guide of the chosen nation. His lot is described in Exodus (2:1-4; 2:5-15; 3:1-15; 5:1-12.36; 12:37; Numbers 10:11n; 22:1n; Deuteronomy 34:1-6). Alfred Lapple in the book "Key problems of Genesis" quotes after Józef Shreiner portraying Moses as a Leader of the nation who did not fight or have any political power, as a Miracle worker or a prophet, however, without any magic or a looking glass; Moses is shown as a man who created a cult and gave the Law, without the necessity of sacrificing anyone. He became the Middleman of the Holy Covenant and not only a guardian of an institution (Lapple, 1983: 208).

The Second Book of Maccabees puts Eleazar, the scholar in The Scripture, as a person to look up to. In the times of Antiochus IV, during religious persecutions, commonly respected old man was forced to eat pork. It was forbidden by the Torah. Due to the fact that the emissaries of Antiochus wanted to spare the old man's life, they tried to persuade him to fake the act of eating the meat. "But he began to consider discreetly, and as became his age, and the excellency of his ancient years, and the honour of his gray head, whereon was come, and his most honest education from a child, or rather the holy law made and given by God: therefore he answered accordingly, and willed them straightways to send him to the grave. For it becometh not our age, said he, in any wise to dissemble, whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, being fourscore years old and ten, were now gone to a strange religion; And so they through mine hypocrisy, and desire to live a little time and a moment longer, should be deceived by me, and I get a stain to mine old age, and make it abominable. For though for the present time I should be delivered from the punishment of men: yet should I not escape the hand of the Almighty, neither alive, nor dead. Wherefore now, manfully changing this life, I will shew myself such an one as mine age requireth, And leave a notable example to such as be young to die willingly and courageously for the honourable and holy laws. And when he had said these words, immediately he went to the torment" (2 Maccabees 6:23-28).

On the pages of the Gospel, Simeon and Anna are placed as "edifying examples" of people who are advanced in their years. God bestows beyond belief upon those who love and serve Him. The Lord let two elderly people recognize His Son in a small child: "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel." ³³ The child's father and mother marveled

at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too." There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:25-38).

"Etre tendu en avant"

According to the Bible senescence is also a symbol of eternity. The everlasting God reveals himself to Daniel as an old man ("As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool" Daniel 7:9a), and in the Book of Revelation twenty four old men symbolize God's court, who praises His glory ("Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads" Revelation 4:4; "The four living creatures said, "Amen," and the elders fell down and worshiped" Revelation 5:14).

Anna Świderkówna in her article "Biblijne błogosławieństwo starości" writes about retreat notes of Teilhard de Chardin. At the end of his life he has done a great deal of pondering over aging and elderliness. His conclusions were that "to be old means to be ready. Being ready means...to be "etre tendu en avant". In the light of old age, this French phrase cannot be translated into Polish literary. As Teilhard de Chardin states, to be ready means literally to be: "forwardly uptight", which in Polish does not make any sense. This is a case where visualization is needed. It is a posture, that a runner takes, waiting for a sign to start: his body bend down forwards, uptight, ready to take off. This is exactly how old age can look like, the age which – as the prophet and psalmist say – grows eagle's wings. It is one's decision to accept or not, the offered wings (Świderkówna, 2000: 94 – 100).

The History of Old Age in Poland (Outline)

Introduction

Aging is a multi-faceted process. Its onset is gradual and it comes more quickly for some people than for others. It would be difficult to identify a universal biological fact which might be treated as the start of the aging process. The meaning of the term "old" has evolved over the ages. With increasing life expectancy, the term "old" has come to be associated with older and older people. In the times when life expectancy was very low, even a 40-year-old was considered old. Centuries later, the term "old" was used to denote someone who was 50 years old and then someone who was 60 years old. Most researchers interested in old age and the process of aging in different historical periods have generally accepted the chronological age of 60 or more years as the definition of an "older person" (Tyszkiewicz, 1985/1986:155; Kukło, 2010:125; Myśliwski, 2001:193; Kabacińska, Ratajczak, 2008:24). The age of 60 years has been used to differentiate mature adults from old adults throughout almost the entire social history of Poland. It is treated as the minimum criterion for defining old age. And just such a criterion has been adopted for the purposes of this paper.

There are similarities in societal perceptions of aging in different historical periods. People were always afraid of it. They anticipated it with anxiety and fear, uncertain if their families would be willing to provide support and care for them. Old age was perceived as a stage in life marked by loneliness, neglect and exclusion. People feared that they would become more and more useless and too weak to be fully self-dependent when they grew old. With decreasing physical and mental capabilities, they would become more vulnerable to falls and injuries and would no longer be able to enjoy the "pleasures" and joys of this world. They would have to come to terms with many limitations and declining capabilities or even be bedridden (Żołądź-Strzelczyk, 2006:58). They were also afraid of typical age-related ailments: incontinence of urine, digestive problems, insomnia, deterioration of eyesight and hearing and declining memory (Wótkiewicz, 2010:49-50). In the opinion of younger generations, the elderly often developed negative personality traits as a result of the aging process, such as avarice and malice. Unable to come to terms with their declining capabilities and frustrated

with the lack of support from their families, some old people would resort to suicide (Wólkiewicz, 2010:41-52).

Although the fate of senior citizens attracts a lot of interest among contemporary researchers, little attention was paid to this age group in the past and their problems were approached with indifference. Old people were not in the focus of public attention, even though old age in those days was seen as something noble, dignified and worthy of respect. Nonetheless, there is no evidence of any interest in this stage of human life and there is no mention of age-related issues in any documents from that time (Kostrzewska, 2011:78). It is very difficult for contemporary researchers to explain how the situation of old people has evolved in Poland over the centuries. Despite scarce and fragmented historical records, some researchers are trying to establish what the lives of old people looked like in the past. The aim of this paper is to describe the position of old people in the Polish society from the Middle Ages to contemporary times.

The Middle Ages and Renaissance

With the Christianization of Poland, old age came to be perceived in a more favourable light, which was consistent with the views prevailing in Europe then. In general, old age was seen as a highly respectable and revered phase of life. Such a way of thinking emerged under the influence of the Bible, which contains a wealth of favourable connotations of old age (Kabacińska, Ratajczak, 2008:16). In the Christian religion, old age is not seen as God's blessing, but just as a stage of human life, spiritual development and the process of becoming mature. All Christians were expected to help old people and treat them with respect and gratitude for their accomplishments. They were to be treated in a similar way as the sick and the poor, receiving support both from their family and the mighty of this world (Dyczewski, 1994:14-15).

It is not known how the Christian ideology spread in the territory of Poland. However, respectful attitudes towards the elderly must have been fairly important, as evident from the chronicle written by Helmond in the 12th century. Helmond mentions that "If a Slave becomes debilitated by a disease or old age, the care of him is entrusted to his descendants, who should look after him with affection" (Helmonda ... , 1974, 411; Korczak, 2005:44). However, no historical records have survived which might shed light on societal perceptions of old people in the first centuries after the baptism of Poland (Kabacińska, Ratajczak, 2008:16)².

² „The state of Polans found itself under the influence of Christianity in the second half of the 10th century, however, the first more extensive writings concerning these issues, drawn up in our lands, were not written until the 11th century (including the first Polish hagiographies) and the 12th century, in which the first Polish chronicles were written. The first texts were authored by foreigners representing the clergy who served as courtiers of the first Piasts. Coming from abroad, they contributed to the spread of Christian views concerning old age in Poland, especially in letters of the Fathers of the Church". (K. Kabacińska, K. Ratajczak, 2008:16).

In the literature of the Middle Ages, human life was usually divided into three stages: youth, maturity and old age. According to most estimates, old people accounted for about 6-8% of the society in the Middle Ages. Undoubtedly, this percentage was so low because of specific hygiene condition, poor nutrition and the state of medical knowledge and practice. There were different perceptions of the old age itself. It was seen not so much as the last, but as a late stage of life during which an elderly person could still engage in active pursuits. This was ultimately followed by a stage of senility or "decrepitude" (Kabacińska, Ratajczak, 2008:24; Myśliwski, 2001:179). How old people were perceived in Poland then was determined not so much by age, but by the functions which they performed in their households (a seventy year old householder enjoyed a higher esteem than a fifty-five year old annuitant who relied on the charity of his relatives) (Kopczyński, 2010:113).

Whether a man was perceived as old or not depended on his appearance. This included visible signs of physical "debility" or signs of diseases, and a wide knowledge about the past, rather than the actual duration of life expressed as a number of years (Myśliwski, 2001:193). Often ill and unable to work, old people were perceived in a similar way as the poor and the disabled. Old age was usually marked by sadness and isolation (Wróbel, 2002:213).

In the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, a man's life expectancy depended on a number of factors including, in particular, the social class to which a given individual belonged. In feudal times, social elites (knights, aristocracy or the patriciate in towns) or members of the clergy usually lived longer than peasants and poor townspeople. Members of higher social classes lived in better conditions and had access to better food, education, medical care etc. (Kabacińska, Ratajczak, 2008:17). Elderly members of social elites often performed specific lifetime functions, for example, they looked after and held authority over their families. With their knowledge, experience and life wisdom, their advice was often sought by rulers, judges and intermediaries in solving family conflicts (Kabacińska, Ratajczak, 2008:28-29).

However, most princes and kings in the Middle Ages used to die in their prime (40-50 years), either as a result of wounds sustained in a battle or after having fallen off a horse while hunting. Very few of them lived until a ripe old age. Knights too were likely to die young. On the other hand, regular practice, hunting trips and tournaments made them very fit, improving the quality of life for those who survived to an old age. Despite living in comfort and affluence, rich townsmen were often decimated by epidemics plaguing large human settlements (Kabacińska, Ratajczak, 2008:17). The magical age of 60 years or more was attained by relatively few people, who were therefore treated with reverence (especially when younger family members were financially dependent on them). However, old people had to live virtuously if they wanted to be respected (Wróbel, 2002:215)³. Individuals who reached an advanced age were usually physically and mentally fit, despite being troubled by a variety of ailments. In

³ Old people were not only revered because of their advanced age, but mostly because of their good qualities, wisdom, specific conduct, their position of authority and their affluence. Individuals who did not "set a good example" did not enjoy much respect.

the last years of his life, Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł (Mikołaj Krzysztof “the Orphan” Radziwiłł lived between 1549 and 1616) wrote: “I have lost my hearing ages ago, my eyesight is deteriorating too. Worse still, my memory is failing me. I even talk with great difficulty and I can hardly make myself understood. I have thus become a half-man”⁴.

Old people were to be a model for younger generations. Upon reaching a certain age, they were expected to behave wisely and to have the ability to help solve problems by negotiation and dialogue. They were also expected to help younger generations with their knowledge and experience (Kabacińska, Ratajczak, 2008:21). Without any doubt, there were old people in the Middle Ages who did not conduct themselves in a respectable manner and had no intention to do what was expected of them. Some old men were promiscuous, wasteful and lecherous, indulging in all pleasures of life despite their age and decrepitude. Such behaviour was obviously disapproved by the public and deemed as unacceptable among the closest family and neighbours, becoming the object of derision and ridicule (Wróbel, 2002:214).

Representatives of middle and lower ranking nobility enjoyed better health, having usually led a healthier lifestyle in their youth and maturity. They benefited from better nutrition and were less keen to indulge in the pleasures of life (Żołądź-Strzelczyk, 2006:60).

A negative effect on the life expectancy of women from higher social classes had numerous child-births and pregnancy-related complications (Kabacińska, Ratajczak, 2008:18)⁵. The livelihood of those women who were fortunate enough to reach an old age was often secured by legal means. In the Middle Ages, the financial and material position of a widow was relatively good. A widow had the right to dispose of the property brought in as dowry. Together with her sons, she could use the property of her deceased husband until she died or remarried. The financial and material position of a widowed gentlewoman deteriorated at the beginning of the 15th century. A widow who claimed an inheritance together with her adult sons was only entitled to a trousseau, dowry and endowments from her husband. To secure the payment of such endowment amounts, a widow took into temporary possession (and could use) the so-called endowment assets (a prince’s or royal property provided by rulers in return for the dowry brought in by their spouses or property left to their disposal for the rest of their lives, to be subsequently transferred to their children). In addition, a widow could use household items, clothes, items of movable property etc. It became a common practice in Poland then to secure a livelihood for a widow by

⁴ The Archives of the Radziwiłł Family: (letters of prince M. K. “the Orphan” Radziwiłł, Jan Zamoyski, Lew Sapieha), Krakow 1885, p.54.

⁵ The average life expectancy of a princess was lower than that of a townswoman, but higher than that of a peasant woman. “It had to do with the number of child-births: in the Middle Ages, the largest number of children was born in rich families. On the one hand, princesses had access to better nutrition and did not have to do any physical work. They did not breast-feed their own children or bring them up (unlike peasant women and townswomen). On the other hand, they gave birth to their first children at a younger age - sometimes at the age of 13 or 14. This in turn, together with numerous pregnancies, had a detrimental effect on their health”. (K. Kabacińska, K. Ratajczak, 2008:18).

providing her with the right to use all assets of her deceased husband until she died or remarried. However, she could not sell any such property or encumber it with debts. The heirs of such a husband could not take over their inheritance as long as it was used by the widow. As a result, many widows found themselves under pressure to remarry or to join a monastery. Only widows with children enjoyed the above-described privileges. Upon their husbands' death, childless widows could only use the property brought in as dowry and all other property items were transferred to the prince (Koczarska, 1975:166-179).

The situation of poor people and peasants was completely different. In these social groups, old people were often perceived as a burden by their children, who were ashamed of them, often got rid of them and failed to provide the necessary care. In rural communities, parents and grandparents were treated with respect until they were strong enough to work hard every day. Only those working hard had the right to live. This was due to the fact that the existing production capabilities were insufficient to satisfy all consumption needs of rural households. Old peasants who could afford court fees, concluded the so-called annuity agreement with their successors in order to secure their future" (Kabacińska, Ratajczak, 2008:26-27).

An "annuity agreement" was a formal arrangement, under which a farmer was entitled to a kind of an annuity for transferring his farm to someone else, usually a family member (son, nephew, son-in-law, etc.). It is not known if such arrangements were already made in the Middle Ages. Annuity agreement were certainly used in the 16th century, as evidenced by entries in court registers from that period (Wyczański, 1992:66; Izydorczyk, 1983:22-23). An annuity agreement could be general or specific. Under a general annuity agreement, care was provided for the person concerned. A specific agreement contained more detailed provisions concerning accommodation (e.g. the person concerned was to be provided with a warm room) or food requirements (the person relinquishing his farm was to dine with other household member or was to be provided with his or her own vegetable beds in the garden, the right to a specific quantity of fruit from the orchard or a specific quantity of peas or turnips or his or her own livestock etc.). Non-performance of contractual obligations led to specific legal consequences. For example, the transfer of the farm was annulled or a fine was imposed on the transferee (Wyczański, 1992:67-68).

Poor peasants, who could not afford to pay court fees, transferred their farms when they were no longer able to farm and work in their master's field. Such a transfer, however, was not confirmed by any legal document. Old people no longer able to work became a burden for their families, who quite often got rid of them. Some families treated their debilitated parents really badly, driving these unwanted "superfluous" old people away from their own homes. Those who found no love, understanding and help among family members ended up as beggars or were cared for by alms-houses. Some looked for shelter in houses of other farmers, strangers or relatives. A similar fate awaited those who had never married, who were childless or whose children had died (Izydorczyk, 1983:22-23). Members of some professions were in particular likely to experience loneliness in their old age (seamen, servants, soldiers, journeymen) (Bogucka, 2010:62).

Debilitated, homeless old people who ended up in alms-houses, established specially for this purpose in every parish, were often treated in an inhumane way (Wróbel, 2002:213). The living conditions in alms-houses made them hardly suitable for human habitation. The food given to their residents was usually donated by wealthy people. Often, it was of poor quality and not fresh (e.g. rancid bacon crawling with worms, unfit for consumption because of its repulsive smell, or fermented beer). Clothes donated for alms-houses were usually worn out, moth-eaten, faded, frayed. Most of them were unfit for further use (Wólkiewicz, 2010:215). Only on holidays could the destitute residents of alms-houses expect a little better food, newer clothes and fresh bread (Wólkiewicz 2010:216-217). Due to ill treatment and neglect, many of them contemplated death as a welcome end, perceiving old age as a state of anguish and suffering (Wróbel, 2002:213-214; Żołądź-Strzelczyk, 2006:60).

In pre-partition Poland

Just as in the previous periods, the situation of old people in pre-partition Poland also depended on their social and family background, legal situation, gender and health condition. The proportion of over 60 year-olds in the Polish society before the partitions is difficult to estimate. They probably accounted for about 6-8% in towns and 5-6% in rural areas (Historia Polski, 1993:24, 27; Kuklo, 1998b:144; Kuklo, 2009:376)⁶.

Among nobility, magnates and wealthy bourgeoisie, the situation of old people was relatively good. In those social groups, old people were usually treated with respect, all the more so because younger people were often financially dependent on them. Magnates were actively involved in political, economic and cultural affairs till the end of their lives (Żołądź-Strzelczyk, 2006:59). Unfortunately, prosperity and access to large quantities of good food had a negative effect on the physical fitness and health of representatives of this social class. Unhygienic lifestyle (laziness, obesity, gluttony, habitual drunkenness, lack of exercise) and sexual promiscuity resulted in a high incidence of venereal diseases (syphilis). A large number of marriages between relatives was the cause of genetic defects. Representatives of this social class were troubled by numerous health problems (metabolic diseases, indigestion, alcohol poisoning, atherosclerosis, sciatica, liver diseases, stomach diseases, cardiovascular diseases, osteoarthritis, strokes, paralyzes, heart attacks, gout also known as podagra, etc.). As a result, very few of them lived to a ripe old age (Kuchowicz, 1969:22-24). Many of those who did manage to reach the "third" age suffered from mental diseases or were troubled by all kinds of neuroses, anxiety, apoplexy attacks, epilepsy etc. (Kuchowicz, 1969:38).

In aristocratic families, old age was experienced in a different way. Those who were lucky enough to reach an advanced age continued to be the heads of their household as long as they could. The property was transferred to descendants

⁶ According to parish registers, at the end of the 18th century people aged over 65 years accounted for 0.9-1.2% of the population.

or relatives when the senior's health declined or when he was no longer able to manage his property. Many noblemen performed official and duties until their death, which contributed to their independence and a good social standing. Even in old age, men from this social class were seldom lonely. Many of them spent their last years with a much younger wife (remarriage after the death of the first spouse was a frequent phenomenon) or stayed with their children. The situation of widows was somewhat different. Their livelihood in old age was secured by means of a will. As a result, some households were headed by women of over 60 years of age. After having relinquished this privilege, they usually spent their last years with their son or daughter as part of the household of the court (Kopczyński, 2010:116). Apart from old owners, residents of noblemen's manors also included female relatives (the owners' sisters or relatives who had no families of their own).

In the period under consideration, noblemen often served as courtiers of magnates all their lives. When they were too old to perform their duties, they usually received parcels of land from their employers or were provided with comfortable, warm and dry accommodation in the vicinity of the palace. Unfortunately, some magnates removed their loyal courtiers without offering any donations or benefits for their lifelong service and employed younger persons in their place (Augustyniak, 2010:78, 82). Women from this social class – widows and spinsters – sometimes found shelter in monasteries (in those not requiring strict enclosure) where they spend their last years. Apart from finding social security, they had a chance to fulfil their spiritual needs there. Some of them, however, caused a lot of trouble and concern to the monastic communities (Kukło, 1998a:189).

In the 17th and 18th centuries, peasant families usually consisted of two generations – parents and children. Three-generation families accounted for only 4.2% of all peasant families. This suggests that very few people reached an advanced age and lived with their children (Kopczyński, 1998:97). In peasant communities, an individual was not psychologically and socially perceived as old until he lost his position as the head of the household. For men, it usually occurred when they were between 65 and 70 years old, as compared with about 60 years in the case of women. In the villein system, the loss of the farmer's position was synonymous with social degradation. Not surprisingly, old people did all they could to avoid it. Men usually managed to hang on to their farms and performed their duties as long as possible, to escape the fate of a tenant or an annuitant. Widowers tended to remarry, often with a much younger woman. This enabled them to run their farms much longer (Kopczyński, 2010:114; Kukło, 2009:378). Most farmers did not transfer their farms to their successors until they were over 65 years old (Kopczyński, 2010:116). With their property still in their hands, it was easier for them to achieve obedience of potential successors. Usually, farms were not transferred to younger family members until the old farmer was unable to perform his duties and work effectively on his farm (Wróbel, 2002:215). It was not easy for an old parent to live under one roof with his adult son or son-in-law. Old men who were strong enough to lend a hand on the farm

were usually treated better. Those who were too frail to work often had to resort to begging or look for shelter in an alms-house (Kopczyński, 2010:116).

The situation of peasant women was a little different. They married younger than men. Those who managed to survive numerous childbirths without complications and who did not fall seriously ill often became widows when they were still young. Very few 65-year-old women enjoyed the status of a householder (those who did were married – not widowed⁷), others were demoted to the status of relatives or tenants. In many cases, when the male householder died, the farm was taken over by an adult son and the mother ceased to fulfil her previous role, remaining with her family as an annuitant or having to look for accommodation in someone else's house (Kopczyński, 2010:114; Kuklo, 2009:377). Some old people were cared for by hospitals. In the late 18th century, there were hospitals in every town and in many villages too. In hospitals, old people constituted a minority. Beggars (often referred to as *dziady* – male paupers and *baby* – female paupers) and cripples (Kopczyński 2010:115). In villages belonging to the Crown, about one third of the population spent their last years as tenants/lodgers in houses of strangers (Kuklo, 2009:378).

In the towns of Old Poland, 60-year-olds and older people accounted for about 6-8 % (Historia Polski, 1993:24, 27),⁸ of the population. The female population there was larger than the male population, especially in big towns. The family position of the elderly was mostly determined by gender (Kuklo, 2010:126-127).

The situation of old people in urban communities was not the best either. Only those who worked as town officials and held prestigious posts (councillors, judges, village mayors, etc) and who were affluent enough did not have to worry about their fate. It was not uncommon for old men to hold the posts of town mayors, entrusted to them because of their experience, social esteem and financial independence. Municipal councils were also dominated by elderly men, who held public offices till the end of their lives (Kopczyński, 1998:97).

In the period under consideration, most townspeople engaged in crafts or trade. They were perceived as unproductive and old not so much when they reached a certain age, but when they were no longer effective in doing business or no longer able to earn a living. "Old age in an Old Polish town usually entailed cessation of economic activity, the loss of the previous social position and dependence on the charity of family members or of the local alms-house. Many old people soon found themselves among the poorest of the poor, living in destitution and extreme poverty" (Kuklo, 2010:122).

Men who were about to reach or who reached an advanced age did not automatically discontinue their social and economic activities. Old age did not bring fundamental changes in their lives. In general, they still headed their households. In large urban centres, they most often lived with their wives. In smaller towns, they lived with their wives, children or other relatives. Only a small

⁷ Only young widows had a chance to get married again. Widows aged 50 and more were unlikely to remarry.

⁸ According to parish registers, at the end of the 18th century people aged over 50 years accounted for 6-12 % of the population, people over 60 years old represented between 1.2 and 2.4% while those over 60 accounted for 0.9-1.2 %.

percentage of 60-year-old men faced loneliness when they grew old (about 6% in small towns and about 13-20% in large towns). The percentage of widowers in this age group is low, which indicates that many of them remarried after the death of their first wife to escape loneliness and to avoid being pushed aside (Włókiewicz 2010:54; Kuklo, 1998:147). Being afraid of marginalization and social degradation, they were determined to continue their business pursuits and earn a living for their families. Very few of them were sent to alms-houses when they were old (Kuklo, 2009:378; Kuklo, 2010:128-132; Włókiewicz 2010:54)⁹.

The living conditions of old women were completely different. More women than men lived to an advanced age, so they were more likely to experience the realities of that phase in life. Only one third of old women still lived with their entire families. Those who were involved in heading their households were often older than their husbands and had to cope with a variety of problems. In the towns of Old Poland, at least one fourth, and in the cities even a half of old women, had to face loneliness in their old age. Widowed women did not have much chance for remarrying (especially those with no financial means, with many children or those who were considered too old to get married again). After the death of their husbands, widows would take over household management tasks (which placed them in a more privileged position than other single women). However, when their son or a son-in-law took over as householder, the widow could not always count on his support (Kuklo, 1998a:150-151; Kuklo, 1998b:154)¹⁰. In such cases, women had to look for gainful employment, seek shelter in an alms-house or resort to begging (Kuklo, 1998a:150-151; Zielińska, 2011:161-162). Only one third of old women in small towns and only one fifth of old women in large towns lived with their children (Kuklo, 1998a:149; Kuklo, 2002:100; Kuklo, 2005:44; Kuklo, 2009:38; Kuklo, 2010:132).

Single women who attained the age of 60, but suffered from poor health found it very difficult to find decent employment. To earn at least a basic livelihood, widowed women in towns often had to start working as street vendors, stall holders and pedlars (Włókiewicz 2010:52). Those who were too debilitated to work and had no means to support themselves lived in poverty and had to rely on support of the closest family and neighbours. The worst fate awaited women who had no families or children on their own. When they grew old, they had to seek shelter under someone's roof. Their status was even lower than that of a widowed mother or mother-in-law or even of a distant relative (Kuklo, 1998a:149, 154). Worse still, women who lived completely alone (Kuklo, 2010:128-129)¹¹ were isolated by the society, becoming an easy target for thieves and thugs, who assaulted these defenceless women, stole their miserable belongings or even murdered them (Włókiewicz 2010:52). A similar fate was faced by women who lived alone and collected herbs for medicinal use. They were accused

⁹ As many as 70-75 % of men in large towns and over 84 % in small towns continued their business pursuits.

¹⁰ In pre-industrial towns, which struggled to maintain a balance between the number of workers and the number of consumers, even the children were usually not interested in the fate of their parents.

¹¹ In general, households of old lonely women accounted for about 20 to 40% of all households.

of witchcraft and contacts with the devil or were harassed and excluded from the local community, while their property was often vandalised (Włókiewicz, 2010:52).

The economic situation of old women widowed by artisans and town officials was relatively better. In the period under analysis, property could be bequeathed to a spouse by means of a will. Wills were often used to secure the livelihood of widows from different social classes. In this way, they inherited the entire property of their deceased husbands and could enjoy a comfortable life in their old age. Wives of guild masters and public officials in particular found themselves in a favourable situation (Kizik, 2010:88-90). In addition, craft corporations (guilds and other associations of artisans) operated the so-called widows' funds from which small amounts of money were paid to impoverished, old and lonely widows of craftsmen (Kizik, 2010:92)¹².

In many towns, women widowed by town officials, teachers and pastors benefited from tax allowances or were paid their husband's salary for a year. Sometimes they received free fuel or were offered free accommodation. Such support was provided by the town for a period of one year. When this period (widow's year) came to an end, women who were unable to work sold property items, resorted to begging or sought shelter in an alms-house (Kizik, 2010:90).

Alms-houses provided shelter for different social groups. Old people only accounted for a tiny percentage of all residents of such institutions (Karpiński, 1983:279-280)¹³. The living conditions offered to individuals who were to spend their last years there were very modest. Hospital buildings (more often made of wood than of brick) were usually adapted for long-term stay of residents of both sexes. "In accordance with strict decrees of church authorities, there were separate chambers for women and men in most alms-houses, or at least separate sleeping chambers. Chambers for *dziady* (male paupers) and *baby* (female paupers) were separated with a wall, hallway, partitions or the doors of these chambers were locked for the night. Larger hospitals also had separate chambers where residents could keep their clothes and personal belongings. In warmer seasons, these additional chambers were also used as single-sex sleeping quarters" (Budzyński, 1987:131).

Residents of an alms-house spent most of their time together in a large chamber, called a common chamber or a day-room, "where they had meals or said their prayers together or took part in other activities. In the common chamber, there was usually a crucifix, a large table placed centrally, a tiled stove in the corner and benches to sit on, which were also used as sleeping benches. Apart from the common room and separate chambers for men and women, hospitals also had a number of ancillary facilities: one or two bakeries, pantry for storing

¹² The husband made payments for the fund on a monthly or annual basis, with interest being charged for overdue payments. Widows could also benefit from donations and legacies. However, payments were often made on a one-off basis and were expected to yield profit at a later time. The profit was used to make payments to the widows at a later time. (Kizik, 2010:92).

¹³ According to A. Karpiński, about 75-59% of residents of 17th century hospitals were women. Unfortunately, the preserved archives do not provide any information on the age of their age. Presumably, most of them were of an advanced age. (Karpiński, 1983:279-280)

food products and a spacious vestibule, which was sometimes used as a kitchen. Richer hospitals had separate granaries, larders for storing food and, less frequently, baths. In contrast, small alms-houses in villages were no different from typical peasant houses" (Budzyński, 1987:131).

Meals in alms-houses were monotonous (consisting mostly of vegetables, peas and grouts) and often were not fresh. Even when a given institution received a large donation of good food, it was usually stolen by hospital administrators, never reaching its intended recipients. Better meals were only provided by institutions which had their own field patch or a farm supplying the necessary foodstuffs. In some hospitals, old people received clothing (every 2 years) and footwear (one pair once a year) (Budzyński, 1987:134-136).

The residents of alms-houses were mostly women representing poorer sections of the urban population (Kuklo, 2009:378). The problem of lonely and poor widows with nowhere to go was so acute that the so-called widows' hospitals were established at the beginning of the 17th century. They were intended to provide shelter for old widows who had nowhere to go. "In Poland, such hospitals were founded in Krakow, Poznań, Vilnius and Warsaw. A place in such a hospital was only available to spinsters and childless widows of a good reputation and with an urban background who declared their intention to remain in widowhood till the end of their lives. New entrants could be charged an entrance fee of about 10 zloty" (Kuklo, 1998a:190-191). The so-called senior lady was elected from among all residents for a term of one year. She was tasked with managing the foundation and was responsible for all matters associated with the functioning of the hospital and its finances. If she performed her duties well, her term of office could be extended for another year. She had to be obeyed by all widows living in the hospital. "Every day, the residents were required to attend a holy mass, to say prayers for the founder (5 prayers) and to look after an altar assigned to them. Sometimes, they also sang rosary and other prayers for someone. In their rules, an emphasis was placed on the need to live in peace and harmony and in loving co-existence with others. Neglect and different misdemeanours were punished with the so-called penance. In most hospitals, residents were not allowed to have visitors and had to obey the principle of equality and equal treatment for all residents. The doors were to be locked for the night by the senior lady, at the established time. Residents were free to dispose of any assets brought in by them" (Kuklo, 198a:192). The conditions in alms-houses were similar (Kropidłowski, 1992:94-110).

A variety of charity campaigns were also organized on an ad hoc basis to provide aid for the poorest old people (e.g. every Friday, affluent families in Wrocław gave alms to cripples and widows) (Włókiewicz, 2010:52). In addition, the oldest members of the Polish society received some support from confraternities existing in those days (which paid welfare benefits to those in need or set up pawnshops where the poor could get a loan, with items of personal property used as collateral) (Karpiński, 2010:316-321). However, it could hardly alleviate the fate of the most disadvantaged people.

Partitioned Poland

The political, social and cultural situation of Poland in the 19th century resulted in a noticeable decrease of the male population. In the group of over 60 year olds, there were also much more women than men (Zielińska, 2011:157). According to data from the late 19th century (1897), 50 to 59 year olds accounted for 6.5% of the society of the Kingdom of Poland. Men aged over 60 years accounted for 6.2% (men - 6.0 % and women - 6.4%) (Historia Polski, 1993:80; Kostrzewska, 2011:78). In the Austrian Partition (Galicia), people of over 60 years of age represented 3.6% of the society in 1869, 4.6% in 1880, 5.9% in 1900 and 5.4% in 1910 (Historia Polski, 1993:82). The circumstances of life of old people in the 19th century were very different and depended on a number of factors. It was not a particularly happy period for the elderly. Nonetheless, the 19th century saw a large number of changes which had a positive effect on societal perceptions of old people and enabled them to enjoy a decent living in the autumn of their lives (Zielińska, 2011:162).

Just as in the periods described above, old men coming from well-to-do families belonging to landed gentry or aristocracy – were relatively more likely to be comfortably provided for in their old age. Men usually managed their property for a long time, often until their death. If a woman was married, her future livelihood was secured by her husband, who made arrangements for the allocation of property assets with his adult children. If a woman was a widow, she was usually pensioned off by her family, who paid a specific amount of money till the end of her life, called an old-age pension (Kostrzewska, 2011:84).

Widows from landowning milieu had a privileged position, but due to the political situation they were sometimes not certain what the future held for them. "A lot depended on the family's economic situation, mutual relations of its members or matrons' mentality and personal features. For some women it was the time of fruit picking, peaceful existence in the family circle, which provided social prestige. Other had to face saving property from bankruptcy and threatening family and social decline or traumatic experiences connected with the loss and having to leave their present residences" (Kostrzewska, 2011:80). However, regardless of their fate, it was them who shouldered the responsibility for maintaining national spirit both in the family circle as well as in the society. Due to their age they were a treasury of the family's and home country's past thanks to which it was easier for them to influence the historical awareness and therefore reviving patriotic spirit in the younger generation (Kostrzewska, 2011:95-96).

Majority of women, having turned 60, together with the progressing old age was withdrawing from managing the family property giving it to total reign of their descendants. Part of them decided at that time to live "at their children" in a small manor house (which was designed just for the family senior women) neighbouring the main manor house or in premises allocated especially for them and support young homeowners (offspring who took over the estate) in managing the property, running women household (for example, they were consultants in selecting menus, collecting food supplies, keeping vegetable or

fruit gardens, etc.) or bringing up their grandchildren (and especially granddaughters on whom they passed attachment to tradition, taught them salon refinement, good manners and social conventions or ways do deal with men), and even in arranging marriages. These widows would always have smaller or bigger amounts of money, ensured for their own disposal by their sons or sons-in-law which allowed them for some independence and keeping their own servants. "The manor house with the mother symbolized the stability of manorial roots and family unity, it was also a place where its members would come to" (Kostrzewska, 2011:86-87, 92-93).

How the relations with one's children were depended to a large extent on the character of the old women landowners. "Requiring respect and obedience – hard-faced, caustic and strict – they were not treated with warmer feelings, and respect paid to them was not rarely with a shade of fear and reluctance to mutual contacts" (Kostrzewska, 2011:94). Quite often, lack of understanding for the younger generation's behaviour would lead to sharp conflicts and year-long feuds. Gentle people however who enjoyed authority and prestige based on love, who did not impose their opinion, did not appropriate the role of their female successor, easy-going with their grandchildren were treated with common respect and devotion (Kostrzewska, 2011:92-94).

The widows who could not find a common language with their own children or wanted to lead a fully independent living would decided to live within the area of family estate, but away from their children, and others would move in their elderly age to the town. Leaving their family seat was always a painful experience for them. They would take their means of support from sums which they had located in real estate or from payments from their heirs (Kostrzewska, 2011:86-87). Some female seniors of the family, due to various reasons, did not give their wealth to their children wanting to secure themselves a privileged and comfortable position for as long as possible. However, such a situation was not frequent. Oftentimes, a lack of understanding and the feeling of loneliness caused serious matrons to seek for peace and quiet behind the monastery's walls (Kostrzewska, 2011:96).

The fate of childless landowners looked slightly different. If they were wealthy, than they did not have to worry about their financial aspect of living standards. Even if the estate was passed to the husband's relatives, they would always have some part given to them that provided their income. Then, from their own part they would make donations to the Church or to charity institutions (Kostrzewska, 2011:89). The worst situation among widows coming from the society of landowners shared those whose estates were influenced by bankruptcy or which were confiscated due to patriotic activities translating into a lack of systematic income, and as a result – sources of living. These women were degraded to the position of residents put at their relatives' mercy and forced to frequent changes of their place of living. However, in the most difficult situation were those among them who could not count on their relatives' care (Kostrzewska, 2011:88-89).

Regardless of the fact how they had to spend the last years of their life, aged widows from this social class were aiming at keeping their privacy. The place

they would live was to provide them a place for peace and was not always accessible to other household members. Having the feeling of financial security, they adjusted their daily rhythm to their own possibilities dictated by age, health state, interests and tastes. Many of them would spend a lot of time on needlework, reading books and magazines, prayers, charity, visiting relatives and friends, etc. Those ones who enjoyed a good health would quite often go on numerous trips on their own (Kostrzewska, 2011:90-92). "One could say that a retired landowner was a persistent traveller; she visited both her relatives as well as her children, travelling from one to the others and quite often spending long months in their manors" (Kostrzewska, 2011:84-85).

The fate of seniors from petty nobility was entirely different. Despite social characteristic which was being a part of nobility (a coat of arms), the life-style of this class was more close to the lowest social class – peasantry. Lack of financial means, having small farms, ignorance, no servants, need to take up casual works providing some income forced people belonging to this group to an economical and very hard-working life-style. Constant struggling with various kinds of problems caused that impoverished noblemen were growing old very quickly and many of them died quite young. The most important person in a petty nobility family was the host. It was him who would always make the most important decisions and take care of financial security of the children. Passing on the farm to a successor would usually take place when he himself was not anymore able to face the farming and household duties. The heir of the estate would usually be the oldest son (the farm would be taken over by one child so as not to deplete and share the estate) who would have to pay off the rest of his siblings. It was also him to secure the living of the elderly parents. The elderly parents, who had no strength to do hard work, would help the young as much as they could. Taking care of small children, tending the house, feeding pets, repairing clothes, plucking feathers, etc., would usually rest on their shoulders (Biernacka, 1966:209-210). Relations between the young hosts and seniors of the family would be quite varied. In some families, the elderly enjoyed obedience and respect among the young, however in the majority of them there were conflicts, bad treatment and even humiliation (Biernacka, 1966:209; Kałwa, 2005:261). The way that a senior was treated depended actually on the general culture of a given family. Women who became widows were also not eager to pass the estate into the children's hands. Used to hard work and managing the female household, they coped with chores perfectly. They would decide to hand over the reigns of management only when they were not strong enough anymore to work in the fields (Ruppertowa, 1888:757).

In peasant environment, an elderly person would usually be the one who was „deprived of strenght and robustness”. Primitive conditions of peasant life, being accustomed to the bulk of duties from the early childhood would speed up the ageing process significantly and there was not many people over 60 years old in that group¹⁴. The situation of seniors who reached old age was, in that social class, one of the most difficult. Usually, when they had no strength to

¹⁴ O długości życia, „Pismo dla Ludu Polskiego” 1845, book 4, p. 141.

further work in the fields their fate would depend on their children who took over the farm (Mędrzecki, 2005:113; Grodziski, 1996:87; Rafacz, 1929:24). Therefore, the best situation was of these elderly people whose children, in exchange for having been handed over the farm, allowed an elderly mother or father to live under the same roof. In some families, relationships between parents and children were harmonious. Parents, as long as possible, would help in the household, take care of small grandchildren and in exchange they got food and clothes. However, in the majority of families, sooner or later, there were fierce feuds and a son, and especially a daughter-in-law would start to treat the elderly as unnecessary people, who live too long and are a hindrance at common home (Kałwa, 2005:261). "They would openly show dislike and contempt towards them. When they were eating from the same bowl, the poor elderly person could not catch up with the young and would always leave the table hungry. Sometimes the daughter-in-law would give them a much worse fare in a special small bowl. Grandchildren, influenced by their parents, addressed the grandfather or grandmother with utter disrespect" (Baranowski, 1969:147). Elderly disability and decrepitude, not infrequently caused in the children contempt, undisguised disgust, as a result of which mother and father were forced to eat on their own, "because they were snorting at the table, spilling soup made from fermented rye flour and milk, scattering potatoes", and sleep in the stable, "because one could feel their smell in the chamber" (Witos, 1981:41).

Such senior's life could not always be called happy and safe. It was the order of the day that many peasant families coping with poverty and many other living problems faced conflicts between the young hosts and a "hampering" sponger who somehow tried to interfere into family and economic matters leading to quarrels, fights, being thrown onto the street and even murders. In order to protect themselves from such situations the hosts, as long as possible, did not allow the young for independent running the farm and were postponing the moment of handing over the farm (which usually took place after a long illness or an accident), and they were trying to secure the guarantees of staying by the family until death were by getting the status of a "resident for life" (Baranowski, 1969:146)¹⁵.

It was even worse in families of landless tenants (residents of villages who did not have their own farm) or peasants running a very small pieces of farmland (called homestead owners), who dealt with privation and poverty for almost all the time. In such families, each member who could not earn their living became an immense burden. Usually, there was also no way of *wycug* since often

¹⁵ In the XIX-century village, local customs and applicable law regulations were binding while handing over the farm to a successor, under which heirs to father's estate were all children, but its biggest part was to be given to the child who would live on patrimony. Decisions on what to give each child was made by the father. Usually life interest (called also a *wycug*, *ordynaryja*, *ornaryja*, alimony, etc. included most of times the right to accommodation, that is to a chamber, a pantry, and even a place on one's own, fuel, a few patches of land or sacks of potatoes already dug up, some cabbage, garden fruits, a certain amount of grain or flour and groats, keeping a cow, etc.) the elderly parents tried to secure at that of children whom they trusted most and whom they were giving the biggest part of the farm (usually ¼ of the whole property). (Baranowski, 1969:146).

there was simply no means to fulfill the agreement. "Sometimes, an elderly person, seeing a difficult situation of its closest decided on humiliating use of public charity, which was just the beggar stick. Many times the family would force the elderly person to go begging"(Baranowski, 1969:147). An elderly person who faced rejection from their closest family could often not go to terms with such a state of affairs. Only some of them adopted an attitude of a quiet resignation, resigning themselves to their fate, the majority would plunge into despair, lament over their tragic fortune, ill-wished their children, sank into a state of apathy and depression (Kapuścińska, 2011:107).

It is not known how big the group of the elderly people deciding to beg was, because many of them dealt with that practice only periodically. "One would wander for bread usually when they did not have to do any support work on their own farm, for example in late autumn, when in larders, after threshing there were plenty of supplies and housewife was more willing to give alms than in other season of the year, during the period preceding the new harvest, when in the family home there was nothing to eat anymore. Sometimes they would go begging only in a year of a great crop failure. Other times, a godly elderly person would, rather for sanctimonious purposes, take up a pilgrimage through church fairs, and after a month-long wandering life broke up with the beggar's circles"(Baranowski, 1969:149). Most probably, among the mid-wealthy peasants only those individuals would go begging who were forced to do so by their children's ungratefulness and selfishness. From the circles of the country poor however, the begging life was taken up by a significant part of the elderly people (Baranowski, 1969:149; Kałwa, 2005:261; Kapuścińska, 2011:105).

The period of begging activity was usually quite short. Elderly, worn out by work people found it difficult to get used to the new life style. Usually, after a few months of wandering life they would go down with some illness which not infrequently ended in death. In winter, during harsh frost, it was common that they would freeze or be severely cold, resulting in an illness and death (Baranowski, 1969:19).

Those beggars who lived longer often experienced generosity from some richer classes. "A beggar could always count that even in a cottage of an unwealthy peasant they would get a small slice of bread or some potatoes and a cup of milk. People were willing to share whatever they had. Also in manors beggars were offered help" (Baranowski, 1969:148). Financial support was given to the beggars also during festivities and church fairs. Often the amount of alms that a beggar would get depended on the ability to attract attention of passers-by. Those, who could sing, tell jokes or some religious or scary stories were given more alms and received higher amounts (Baranowski, 1969:148-149).

Many beggars, despite age and numerous limitations connected with illnesses, would often change their place of begging. Former farmers, for example whose ungrateful children forced to go begging, preferred to avoid their neighbourhood so as not to come across old neighbours and acquaintances. Others would go to the so-called holy places for sanctimonious purposes and wanting to collect more alms, or wanting to see themselves places famous for miracles and healings (Baranowski, 1969:150).

The situation of elderly people coming from towns did not look better, either. In all social groups residing in towns – also in the richest ones – the elderly were trying to manage the home property as long as possible. They were perfectly aware that handing over the reins to the young could have had a negative influence on their family and financial status. In case of bourgeoisie managing a big fortune was not the easiest task, but men from that class would hand over their wealth to their offspring only when they could no longer do it due to poor health condition. They remained married usually until their death, because even if the first, and then the next wife died, they would get married as soon as possible (Pytlas, 1994:328).

In petit bourgeoisie families handing over the wealth to the young was also postponed as long as possible. Professionally active senior citizens from this social group who were over 60 years old dealt mainly with craft, trade (publicans, owners of taverns) or services and transport (cart drivers, coachmen). However, the majority of them (over 60%) were people professionally passive deriving their means of living from owned wealth (Zielińska, 2011:169). Men from this circle who widowed and felt still strong enough to run their family business, got married again. Those who did not decide to enter into another marriage and whose financial situation allowed for that lived on their own. Widowed women did not hurry with handing over their wealth to children, either, but they tried to manage it themselves. And those, who did hand over their wealth to children, usually did not take up any gainful employment but were trying to be helpful at their children's home in exchange for board and providing a roof over their head. In reality, only that part of widowed senior citizens who were not capable of further independent existence would usually live with their offspring under the same roof. In this group, during the whole XIX century there were significantly more women than men (Zielińska, 2011:165). Often, beside an ailing father or mother in craftsmen's and shop owners' families, also relatives who required care (parents-in-law, widowed aunts, etc.) were trying to secure themselves a place for their old age (Najdus, 1988:61).

A slightly different situation was in the families of intelligentsia. In XIX century this class of people was only starting to form on Polish lands. Its older representatives started to be especially visible at the end of the discussed period. Due to the fact, that the majority of the intelligentsia went in for the so-called liberal professions (artists, doctors, home teachers) they were forced to work almost till the end of their life so as to have means for living (Zielińska, 2011:169). A slightly better fate for old age awaited those who were working on government positions for their whole life. At the end of XIX century, under the Prussian and Austrian rule a retirement pension system was introduced (Makarzec, 2012:198-200; Malaka, 2013:9-10). However, the amount of remuneration was very low and was usually enough for a very meagre existence. Widows of husbands employed on the governmental positions were entitled to the so-called widow's pensions. However, that was so low that they were often described as beggar's (Homola, 1981:125).

The most difficult living situation was for elderly people from working families. Only few of them lived up to the age of 60 (Żarnowska, 1974:173)¹⁶. Having turned 60 a worker was usually eliminated from the labour market since a whole mass of the unemployed young was waiting for their place. Only a small, specialized and difficult to replace group of workers did not have to worry about being dismissed from the plant (Żarnowska, 1974:161)¹⁷. Those, who did not have any work did not have any security for old age, either, they were usually a huge burden to their families, that is why they most often ended up in a poorhouse or on the street (Kałwa, 2005:261; Zielińska, 2011:165,169).

In XIX century, the majority of towns had houses for cripples and elderly people in need of support. A precursor of establishing shelter places for the elderly was Warszawskie Towarzystwo Dobroczyńności (Warsaw Charity Association), which in 1817 set up the first *Dom Starców i Kalek* (Home for the Elderly and Cripples) on the Polish lands, which was for 130 people, in Wola Grzybowa near Warsaw. The home was adapted to the residents' needs, they were provided a constant ministry, and those who felt strong enough and were willing to – small tasks like stripping feathers or lint (bandages) (Markiewiczowa, 2002:103-113)¹⁸. Modelling on the Warsaw home, attempts were undertaken to open similar institutions in other towns. This did not mean, however, that there was enough space for everyone who wanted to benefit from this kind of help. They had usually not enough places and the number of people waiting for support was quite often bigger from the number of people who received it (Zielińska, 2011:162; Tomaszewicz, 2010:142). Also conditions in such institutions left much to be desired. "Dark, small, stuffy rooms, cluttered with a row of narrow beds, between which there was just little space to get through. Near some beds there were green boxes of some of the wealthier residents, a small chest of drawers here and there, paupers' last treasure, and all in all everything pressed, constrained. One looks around in vain wondering if it is a prison or a community home. (...) Because of such a bad treatment of the elderly people (...) the utter bitterness of philanthropy can be felt at every point" (Grotowski, 1910:222-223). Rooms where the elderly people stayed were rarely renovated and aired. Stiffness and stench inside them was usually unbearable (Konopnicka, 1886a:3-4, Konopnicka, 1886b:13-14)¹⁹. Equipment of such shelters was also poor. Inside the

¹⁶ At the end of the XIX century senior citizens in this social class constituted: in industry, craft, construction (with factories) about 2.7% (women 1.8%, men 2.8%), in trade and food business about 3.5%, in transport and communication about 4.4% (women 4.0%, men 4.5%), in domestic service and services about 4.6% (men 6.6%, women 3.9%), labourers about 13% (men 10.2%, women 19.6%). See: (Żarnowska, 1974:173).

¹⁷ Such "specialists" were usually the workers of a distillery or railways. (Żarnowska, 1974:161).

¹⁸ Later on the Home was moved to Warsaw and the next one – making an effort to meet huge demands – was opened as late as in 1887. In both homes about 300 elderly people could find some shelter. (Markiewiczowa, 2002:103-113).

¹⁹ A heartbreaking picture of a home for old and poor people from "upper classes" was presented by M. Konopnicka in "Świt". She writes that in the home she visited there were only elderly people over 80 years old – women and men. Their appearance was horrifying for the writer. The women – crooked, huddled, bent beyond comprehension, look as if all of them were born cripples and their faces, whose muscles were tightened for so many years in different grimaces to arouse pity, changed into some kind of masks so hideous that one turns

rooms there were usually some divan beds, a table and stools or a bench put closely next to one another, cup shelves were hanging on the walls. Bedclothes included palliasses and cushions filled with straw and felt quilts lined with percale (Mazur, 2010:140).

Similar conditions were in sleeping rooms set up for those elderly people who would need help only temporarily and for beggars. They usually consisted of one big room filled with divan beds, on which people admitted for the night were accommodated. There was a cash register at the entrance doors where charges bought tickets for the night (for 4 copecks)²⁰. Also in these institutions the conditions were an insult to human dignity. The charges who were sent to the sleeping rooms were disgusting in their appearance. "Tousle-haired (...), with faces unwashed since ages; black necks, vests of a dozen or so colours; faded, patched up, threadbare, trousers which have many holes but no button, and old sleepers on their feet, dried soles with no boots, parts of cloth without straps tied to legs with strings" (Kurier, 1898:3)²¹. There were also workshops in the night shelters where the charges could take up employment, for example a workshop for glueing envelopes, a workshop for sewing blouses, sacks, etc.

In the second half of the XIX century shelter homes for specific social and religious groups were being opened. Many of those new institutions were for people who could cover in part from their own means the costs of living of, e.g. elderly female teachers, governesses, impoverished landowners (Mazur, 2010:135,139; Mazur, 1999:61-63)²².

Also in the countryside people were trying to help in some way the impoverished elderly. The help was usually providing some free extra meals. The products to prepare meals were usually provided by the local manor house, and numerous gentlewomen surrounding one of the landowners would sew new and repair old clothes (Kostrzewska, 2011:95-96; Kita, 2010:23). At the beginning of the XIX century, in some villages there were still the so-called hospitals for the elderly – small, primitive, usually two-chamber shelters, built at the request of church authorities by the local peasants, where homeless old peasants waited for the end of their life. One chamber was for women, the other one for men. In these hospitals, in case of an exceptionally difficult situation the elderly could find a primitive shelter and board at the cost of the whole group. Peasants, depending on the size of land, were ordered each year to give for hospital purposes a certain amount of corn and a number of heads of cabbage. This constituted

their eyes away immediately". There was no laundry in the building, and the underwear store and larder were in the same room. The elderly people who were staying there were guaranteed a bed, a meal and heating. They were not provided any additional activities, and only those of them who were less crippled would knit, the rest was bored. See more in: (Konopnicka, 1886a:3-4, Konopnicka, 1886b:13-14).

²⁰ For a fee, a beggar would get with no bedding and a plate of soup or a cup of tea.

²¹ „Kurier Codzienny” 1898, no 44, p. 3.

²² Such kind of institution was for example a shelter for female teachers which was located in a tenement house surrounded by a garden for walks. In the institution there were two drawing rooms, two bathrooms, a library, a kitchen, a larder, a laundry room, a mangle and small rooms for residents. Only a teacher who paid for herself could get a single room. (Mazur, 2010:135,139; Mazur, 1999:61-63).

a basis to provide the living of the elderly people from the poorest rural families. Conditions that the charges were provided were tragic. Lack of means to run this type of institutions led to their liquidation and elderly people from villages, wanting to find a roof over their head, had to emigrate to towns (Baranowski, 1969:147).

Interwar and second world war period

Having regained independence by Poland in 1918 the number of citizens, due to migration movements, was changing constantly. Only the first census which took place in 1921 gave a true picture of the state of Polish society. It appears from information in the census that people over 60 years old constituted 7.2% (Historia Polski, 1993:144-14), in Warsaw – 5.8% (Strzelecki, 1968:15). A slight improvement of housing conditions of the people, development of state social care, introducing new pension and retirement benefits as well as development of medical care contributed to extending human life and at the same time to increasing the number of seniors in the society. According to information from 1930 senior citizens over 60 made up 7.8% (Historia Polski, 1993:144-145), in Warsaw 7.7% (Strzelecki, 1968:15).

Quality of life of the elderly did not change significantly in comparison to the time of the Partitions. The best situation was enjoyed by people coming from rich landowning or bourgeois families, poverty, humiliation and quite often homelessness affected the poorest elderly people. Young farmers or successors, having taken over the family estate usually treated the elderly, ailing parents badly (Żarnowski, 1969:63). Many elderly people, heedless of harassment from the young successors decided at their elderly age to stay by the children and help them as much as they could. Some of them would still take up gainful employment (e.g. some elderly women would take care of a flat during the hosts' absence, took care of the children, helped in nursing the sick at home, peeled potatoes in plants or restaurants, etc.). And those, who were left alone in their old age, lived in poverty, in shabby, damp and infested with wet rot little rooms or had to turn to social care. The better off (usually scientific workers) would rent out a part of their flat and paid their living from the rental fees (Aszoff, 1995:40-41).

Only people, who were working professionally their whole life, had a secured (although very modest) retirement security for their old age. A social security system established after regaining independence did not cover with its scope all professionally active people. In the end, in 1927 an Order of the President of the Republic of Poland as of 24 November 1927 on Office Workers Social Security²³, under which office workers or their families were entitled to financial rights as an old-age pension (Organiściak, 2010:156)²⁴, disability pension,

²³ Order of the President of the Republic of Poland as of 24 November 1927 on Social Insurance of Office Workers. Official Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland of 1927, no 106, item 911.

²⁴ Office workers who paid at least 60 contribution-payment months and maintained their entitlements as well as were over 60 years old in case of women and 65 years old in case of

allowances and one-off gratuity as well as payments in kind (connected with medical care). Retirement insurance of workers was introduced as late as from 1934 under "Social Insurance Act", called also a merging act, due to the fact that apart from insurance against sickness and accidents at work as well as occupational diseases, it also included insurance against disability, old age and death. It also provided financial security for workers' widows, orphans and secured the so-called death benefit and one-off gratuity²⁵. Old people who had some time of working experience but could not acquire entitlements to a pension due to not being subject to insurance before retirement regulations came into force received the so-called old age benefit. Moreover, people not fulfilling the entitlements to retirement benefits but permanently unable to perform their profession were entitled to a one-off gratuity whose amount depended on the number of contribution-payment months²⁶.

The worst was situation of elderly people²⁷, who were not covered by the Act or who did not work professionally by the period of time required by law and were left to the favour of social assistance. A deep economic crisis which took place during that period contributed to increasing the number of senior citizens who did not have any security, having no means to live they would start to beg or reported themselves for some kind of support to various church and secular charity organizations (Majka, 1985:218). Elderly people using various forms of social support constituted in interwar Poland almost 20% of the social assistance clients (Aszoff, 1995:40-41)²⁸. In this group, the majority was constituted by women (about 33%) (Aszoff, 1995:40)²⁹. There were significantly fewer men since they either died before turning 65 or acquired rights to the old-age pension (Aszoff, 1995:39). The amount of benefits paid by the social assistance fluctuated from 5 to 30 zloty per month. The biggest number of benefits, that is about 50 percent was constituted by allowances at the amount of 10 zloty. There was significantly fewer 15-zloty allowances and about 25% of them constituted

men were entitled to the old-age pension (it could be shortened by 5 years, on condition that men had 40, and women 35 years of professional experience). (Organiściak, 2010:156).

²⁵ Social Insurance Act. Official Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland of 1933, no 51, item 396. In the Act conditions that an insured party had to fulfill in order to use social benefits in the future were specified more precisely.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The term senile age was used in Polish social legislation in 1927. An order of the President of the Republic of Poland as of 24 November 1927 on Office Workers conditioned acquiring the right to senile disability pension on reaching an age established generally uniformly for women and men at the level of 65 years.

²⁸ The basic form of financial help for elderly people were financial aids but very often they were also given coal, clothes, underwear, medical supplies (for example glasses). (Aszoff, 1995:40-41).

²⁹ Women who got to aid centres had usually no profession and before they had either been supported by their husbands or children, or had been working as laundresses, dressmakers, tricots makers, glovemakers, traders, servants and had not been subject to retirement insurance. Among these women there was also a significant (about 10% group of former governesses and private teachers, who deemed themselves hurt and socially degraded by the fact that in their old age they had to apply for aid. (Aszoff, 1995:40).

allowances at the amount of 7, 13, 20 and 25 zloty³⁰. Allowances were given in cash, food vouchers or bread. Financial allowances were usually sent by post (Aszoff, 1995:41). The poor elderly people used the major part of money obtained from allowances to pay the rent. They usually lived in some mean, damp basement, not that often attics. In order to reduce the rental costs a few poor people would live in one little room (Zdanowski, 1936:32, 67-68). Only a relatively small group of people collecting allowances lived in their own small rooms and many of those who knew that they would not get by without another person's help, lonely, decrepit and sick landed in shelters run by various associations as well as secular and church charities (Aszoff, 1995:42).

During the II World War the housing situation of the whole Polish society worsened significantly. Elderly people, left with no means to live and possibility to earn their own living would starve and start to beg. Many seniors, thanks to the fact that they avoided being transported for works in Germany or to a concentration camp (Kroll, 1977:240)³¹ helped the young and even worked in conspiracy. Those, who used to be wealthier before the War would sell out their possessions at flea markets so as to be able to buy some food. Some of them started to take up trade, transport food from the country into the towns. Those however, who could not somehow take care themselves of their own fate, lonely displaced and ailing people looked for help in secular and church charity organizations (Kroll, 1977:314). Social assistance operating during the time of war dealt foremost not with the elderly, but with children, orphans, repatriates and displaced people. The basic form of support was providing additional food. According to information from the first years of war, among the people benefiting from such form of support was about 6.5 % of people over 65 (in the time of peace the percentage of elderly people benefiting from this kind of support was very high) (Kroll, 1977:185).

In 1941, having carried out a re-qualification of the social assistance charges the priority in obtaining support, apart from children and displaced people, was also given to the elderly (Kroll, 1977:187). The seniors who needed provision the most were located in refuges, among which, with time, "special" ones for young people, women, the sick, disabled and elderly were set up. They provided their charges temporary shelter, half-board and medical care in special refuges. Stay in refuges and board were partly paid, but numerous concessions were granted (Kroll, 1977:217).

³⁰ Aids received from social assistance were not enough to meet the fundamental living needs. At the end of 1930s bolted rye bread (1 kg) was 0.35 zł, 1 kg of sugar 1.00 zł, 1 kg of wheat flour – 0.54 zł, 1 egg - 0.09 zł, 1 kg of potatoes – 0.11 zł, 1 litre of milk – 0.28 zł, 1 kg of beef – 1.47 zł, 1 litre of paraffin oil – 0.38 zł, 1 kg of pork – 1.51 zł, 10 kg of coal – 0.48 zł, 1 kg of pork fat – 0.66 zł, electricity charges for 10 kWh – 5.30 zł, 1 kg of butter – 3.62 zł. (Mały Rocznik, 1939:234-235)

³¹ Women over 50 and men over 60 did not qualify for being transported to labour. (Kroll, 1977:240).

Post-war period

The situation in which Poland found itself after the Second World War had finished was tragic. Destroyed cities, destitution, lack of food and no roof over head receded the issue of elderly people into the background. Demographically speaking, the gender imbalance increased. In 1950 people aged 60 and over made 8.2% of the population; in this age group, there were 148.9 women for 100 men (Historia Polski, 1993:145). The disproportion between the number of men and women was especially remarkable in towns.

Prevalent poverty had a negative impact on people's living conditions regardless of their age. Lack of medicine, undernutrition and poor housing caused an increase in tuberculosis cases as well as in other social diseases. In the first few years after the war massive resettlements and returns from forced labour together with political purges led to destabilization, lack of security and confidence in others.

At the same time the "new authority" tried to settle all the social issues from the very beginning. One of them was creating an effective social security system in case of disease, disability, unemployment and old age. The reconstruction of the pre-war insurance institutions (Jarosz, 2012:196)³², started as early as in 1945 together with establishing The Social Security Institution (Mielczarek, 2006:61) as the main one. Providing financial support to a huge number of disabled war veterans, orphans and old people was an extremely important and urgent issue. „In the new system, employees were relieved of compulsory insurance and the employer was burdened with the payment of all the insurance premiums³³(...). On 8th January 1946 a new decree stated that retired people were eligible for free medical care” (Jarosz, 2012:197). In consequence, the number of people taking retirement pensions started to increase gradually³⁴. In 1949 widows who were 55 and over or had a minor child obtained entitlements to get disability pensions (the sum of which was the same regardless of the profession of the late husband (Jarosz, 2012:198). In 1953 farm labourers gained entitlements to retirement insurance (Jarosz, 2012:201).

In spite of the positive changes the then retired people, pensioners and old people lived in poverty. “To survive on one's own with only one retirement pension (disability pension) was for the majority of the entitled very difficult, often just impossible” (Jarosz, 2012:214). The amount of the benefits oscillated around the breadline, which forced the pensioners to look for alternative sources of income. In these conditions a huge number of the elderly decided to take up a job³⁵, or to help their families in exchange for a financial support, food or a roof over their head. Even the sick and the disabled undertook odd jobs to ensure a minimum standard of living (Szubert, 1985:106). The most common occupations

³² It was not an easy task since after the war the insurance institutions system was almost totally damaged. (Jarosz, 2012:196).

³³ Decree of 29 IX 1945 on paying social insurance and labour fund contributions in total by employers, Polish Official Journal of Laws, no 43, item 240.

³⁴ In 1945 disability pensions were collected by 174 thousand people, and at the end of 1948 – 590 thousand, including about 375 thousand retired workers.

³⁵ Share of professionally active retired people was 51% in Warsaw and 38% in Łódź.

taken up by the elderly were: a caretaker, a street seller, a store-keeper selling cigarettes or sweets and a housekeeper. "There were cases of taking up a job which was inadvisable (a consumptive working as a waiter or a person partially sighted as a chauffeur!)" (Jarosz, 2012:218). The situation was most difficult for the lonely, the sick and the disabled (they were eligible for the benefit for the helpless but it was so low that it did not fulfil even a small part of their needs) whose life was inert and resembled waiting for the death (Jarosz, 2012:214).

In the first years after the war the help for the elderly often boiled down to distributing charity gifts from abroad, providing saver tickets for public transport, giving discounts for some staple goods (coal, food, window glass, etc.). Another way out of the difficult situation, especially for the weakest ones who lived alone, was applying for institutional help which practically meant placing them in a pensioners' house (Mielczarek, 2006:59). However, in the 50s there were not many houses of this type because the pre-war ones, usually run by the Catholic Church or other organizations, had been taken over by the state or closed down³⁶. The potential boarders were deterred by the conditions which the then houses could guarantee. The rooms were usually shared and were not adapted for the sick who wanted peace and quiet. It does not come as a surprise that the elderly did not want to be placed in such houses and those who lived there were considered unlucky and shown sympathy (Jarosz, 2012:223-224).

The conditions in which the elderly people had to live in the first years after the war and the financial insecurity led to a barrage of criticism on social policies of the then state. It was a generally accepted opinion that the state does not treat the disabled pension as "remuneration due to hard and many years' work" but rather as a benefit which was not big enough to sustain the basic necessities of life. People wrote full of sorrow letters to the radio: "The retirement pension should be an honour and proud for someone who worked hard for many years and should ensure that the last years of life will be relatively peaceful. In reality, every employee fears the word like fire, like death, like a slow death. It keeps the elderly awake and disturbs their peaceful work. In times when The Polish People's Republic is blooming, old people are a dark stain, they, like remorse, wander around offices and employment agencies and reach out for any job to be able to live – to live anyhow" (Jarosz, 2012:217).

After 1956 the first attempts to reform the social care system appeared. Due to the arising problem of the lack of jobs for young people, retired people were gradually dismissed from work. In 1958 the Law on changes of certain laws on disabled pensions and provisions³⁷, was issued which restricted the possibility of working and receiving a retirement pension at the same time as well as it prohibited working full time under the penalty of suspending the benefits. The disabled pension was not suspended if the pensioner had a job that gave him a monthly income lower than 500 zł per month (which at that time was a minimum wage). The action which was launched at that time and aimed at

³⁶ In 1955 there were 30 of them in whole Poland with the total number of places of 2520, in 1957 – 32 with 3104 places.

³⁷ Act of 28 March 1958 on Amending Regulations on Disability Pensions and Provisions, Polish Official Journal of Laws, no 21, item 98.

dismissing people who reached the retirement age resulted in 350 thousand pensioners fired from work. "Introducing an income threshold at 500 zł, keeping eligibility for the disabled pension whose amount had not changed since 1968 together with an increase in a minimal wage made working less and less profitable (Jarosz, 2012:220).

Those who had children were forced to depend on their help, those who were single started to starve.

The 70s, in other words in a period called "Gierek's decade", are considered to be better in terms of the financial situation of senior citizens. Retirement and disabled pensions (42%) as well as farming (39.6%) were the main sources of livelihood for the elderly. At that time only a small percentage of people aged 65 and over stated that the help received from their children was the major source of livelihood (Dyczewski, 1994:28). Seniors became self-reliant. Simultaneously, together with industrial development young people from cities and from the countryside became more mobile. They left their homes and parents to look for a job and better wages. Living on one's own not with one's parents was more and more trendy. However, most of adult children assumed responsibility for taking care of their parents and were concerned about their problems. They tried to visit them regularly but how often they met depended on how far from one another they lived. In the case of death of one parent the other one moved into his/her child house or was helped in other ways (Łączkowska, 1983:58-59). At the same time "social pressure was put on old people, especially in villages and small towns, to determine how old people should dress and that they should not get involved in new relationships, sexual life after the age of 50 was considered abnormal and was said to exhaust and shorten one's life span. In times of economic shortage the basic criterion of an old people's usefulness was their ability to queue for scarce goods" (Czekalski, 2005:364). In the 70s the most difficult situation was for the seniors who decided to live on their own in the country. Their attachment to where they lived made them cultivate the soil almost till death and stay there at any cost.

At the end of the 70s and the beginning of the 80s, the economic crisis started in Poland, which was associated with the difficult political situation, massive labour strikes, crop failure, price increases in food, budgetary imbalances, inflationary pressure. It was followed by huge supply problems, people queued to buy basic food products (there were even problems with buying bread). After the introduction of the martial law, food and industrial goods were rationed. Everyday life became more and more difficult lacking security and perspectives. This negative situation had an especially strong impact on old people, not to mention the ones living alone. At the beginning of the 80s, as a result of not being able to cope with the difficult living conditions more and more seniors decided to live in nursing houses (it was about 100 thousand people) (Mielczarek, 2010:93). Those more resourceful started to earn money by offering a service of queuing for goods (they were called "queuers") (Skotarczyk, 2004:239).

The seniors' situation did not get any better in the 90s. Very low retirement and disability pensions placed them in the poorest social class. "The seniors' income based on a retirement or disabled pension hardly sufficed to sustain life

needs and although they usually were high enough to ensure economic independence from children they did not enable a lifestyle change which is necessary if the last years are to be useful and satisfying" (Dyczewski, 1994:29). The lack of financial sources was correlated with the quality of life. Many retired people could only afford to buy basic food products or medicines and to pay the rent. Most of them lived without any comfort (Dyczewski, 1994:30-31)³⁸. The number of seniors living on their own increased in comparison with the previous periods. Children usually moved out of their homes after starting their own families and only in the country the percentage of the seniors who lived with their families was bigger. Those who could not manage because they were senile, sick and disabled were sent to nursing houses (Czekalski, 2005:364).

We cannot say that today's Polish seniors live an affluent lifestyle. Most of them have to live economically to fulfil their needs, some do not have enough money to fulfil their basic needs³⁹. Due to low retirement and disabled pensions they cannot make the ends meet, especially when we take into account expensive medicines and the high cost of the flat upkeep. With high unemployment rate, retirement pensions are often the only source of income for the whole family.

Summary

Observing the fate of elderly people in Poland over the ages we cannot resist an impression that regardless of the period, social class that the seniors came from, their situation was never a good one. The position of an elderly person, irrespective of the times and level of civilization development, depended on their financial status and belonging to a particular social category. An elderly and rich person could secure themselves a safe and stable elderly age, whereas a person who was elderly but poor was condemned to contempt, being deserted and lack of care. Social norms existing in each period did impose on the young generation the obligation to respect the elderly, but unfortunately, it was not always reflected in dullness of everyday life. Let the essence of an approach towards the old age over the ages be Simone de Beauvoir's words, who encompassed the essence of being a senior saying that "This is the meaning that people attach to their existence and their system of values is defined by the sense and value of old age. And on the contrary: the way that a society treats the elderly reveals the whole truth – sometimes carefully hidden – about its priorities and aspirations. The means applied (...) to solve the problem of the elderly [have been – MSO] indeed diverse: they are killed, left for certain death, they are provided life minimum, ensured a dignified end or are even worshiped and exalted. (...) Only a murder is prohibited unless it is disguised" (Beauvoir, 2011:96).

³⁸ Every tenth retired person's flat did not have a water supply system (10.69%), almost every fourth (23.06%) did not have a flushed toilet (23.06%), over 1/4 (26.92%) did not have a bathroom, 40.98% of the flats did not have hot running water, almost half of them (45.07%) did not have a gas connection and central heating (43.54%) and almost two thirds of them (71.75%) a telephone. See: (Dyczewski, 1994:30-31).

³⁹ Women are in a worse financial situation – 17% of them do not have enough means to get by till the end of the month, which is more in comparison with 10% of men from this age group.

Panis bene merentium, or Retired Secondary School Teachers in the Kingdom of Poland

Introduction

Pension in the nineteenth century was not a common thing and it would initially concern, just like in the Roman period, only the army. Gradually, this form of insurance was being extended to government services. In the nineteenth century, in the Kingdom of Poland, this group included state officials, including teachers employed in state-financed schools.

The aim of this article is to show some diverse activity forms of people constituting this particular professional group. Pension was a distinction, an opportunity to emphasize contribution of teachers who were awarded with it, especially as it would cap their considerably long career. Therefore, great premium based feasts were being organized in the wake of the retirement of those who were said to eat, from that moment on, the bread of the meritorious ones (*panis bene merentium*).

The amount of pension as well as the way in which it was allotted were under strict regulation. Corresponding administrative decisions were to be found in *The Pension Act for the public professors and teachers in the Kingdom of Poland*, signed by Tsar Alexander I on May 1, 1825, as amended on March 16, 1835, and later also in *The Supplementary Pension Act* dated July 14, 1841, which was further changed by The Administrative Council's decisions in 1850. Teachers were entitled to receive pension after working for twenty years; however, they would get only one fourth of the benefit; after five more years this sum would rise to half the full amount. Thirty years of service guaranteed three fourths of the pension. The highest pension amounted to nine tenths of the original salary and it accrued for those who worked for thirty five years. No teacher could receive a pension until he or she turned 50, with the exception of situations when the retirement was caused by health problems or when a teacher had been made redundant due to the reorganization of the system of education.

Clergymen working as teachers were entitled to pensions, too, however the Administrative Council stipulated that they would not receive it if they were

also entitled to benefice. Yet, this would not be the case if benefice had been being paid during the period of employment in school⁴⁰.

From 1867, Russians resorted to entirely different regulations concerning pension rights. An entire article of the fourteenth ukase of July 30, 1867 regulated the situation of teachers of Russian origin delegated to work with the territory of the Governorate of the Kingdom of Poland. The said article stated that Russian teachers working under the Department of Public Enlightenment were entitled to a full pension after as long as twenty years of service and to a half of it after fifteen years. The time in service for the Department of Public Enlightenment in Russia was also included in the years of service required to merit pension rights. Precisely, every five years of work in the Empire accounted for four years of service within the territory of the Governorate of the Kingdom of Poland. The total amount of pension was equal to an annual salary, half of pension money equaled to half of an annual salary. Wives and children of deceased Russian teachers were paid one-off support amounting to a two-monthly salary⁴¹.

The amount of pension paid was highly diversified. Within just a group of twelve people who received pensions after thirty five years of work, the spread was from 400 rubles for a Catholic religion teacher to 1500 rubles for a school inspector teaching classical languages. Among people who received pension after twenty years in service, the lowest pension amounted to 125 rubles, while the highest to 3000 rubles (Kula, 2012:172).

Teachers, unless we would be considering some rare and extreme cases, did not live in poverty; yet, they were not rich either. Russian teachers fared better than teachers of other nationalities, Poles including. Earning better wages, they could maintain a higher standard of living than they could probably afford living and working in Russia.

Between 1862 and 1873, 997 teachers worked in secondary schools in the Kingdom of Poland. The available sources, including personal files, enable us to document the fate of 40 out of 100 of teachers who received pensions. The number is this small because we are forced to rely on official personal files, the teachers' data would normally end on the date of retirement. That is why all the information on retired pedagogues comes from sources other than personal surveys, that is from: diaries and memoirs, articles or press notes, biographical dictionaries or obituaries. Naturally, the said sources are highly scattered therefore hard to find; thus collecting such data takes many years. Nevertheless, this small group is worth presenting as their work and hobbies help us in describing and understanding the types of activities retired teacher dedicated their time to back in the days when the Kingdom of Poland was subordinated to the Tsar just as the Polish education system was subordinated to the Russian Department of Public Enlightenment.

⁴⁰ Excerpt from the minutes of the meeting of the Administrative Council of November 17, 1863., *Zbiór przepisów emerytalnych cywilnych*, p. 567–571.

⁴¹ Ukase to the Governing Senate of July 30, 1867, *"Dziennik Praw"*, vol. 67, Warszawa 1867, p. 289–299.

If there was a chance for an extension of employment, at the request of the person concerned and with the consent of the school superior, it was possible to continue work as a supernumerary teacher. The shortage of teachers of ancient languages was particularly noticeable in state schools in the Kingdom of Poland (the situation in Russia was similar though). Therefore, those teachers at the moment of their retirement were often offered a chance to stay in the school. Upon the receipt of a pension, seven teachers decided to continue their work. Among them was Ignacy Boczyliński, a graduate from The University of Sankt Peterburg, who taught ancient languages in schools in Piotrków and Radom. From 1861, he taught Polish language. As a pensioner, he taught for several years in a gymnasium in Warsaw. He also collaborated with *The Pedagogical Review*, *Warsaw Library*, *Daily General* and *Home Helper*. Being a retired teacher, he created and published several grammar textbooks, inter alia: *The root of words or etymology* (Warsaw 1874), *Polish grammar rules* (Warsaw 1874), *Syntax and basics of spelling* (Warsaw 1875). He also translated from German the textbooks by E. F. Bojesen: *Greek ancient times or a picture of political, social and private life of ancient Greeks* (Warsaw 1875), *Roman ancient times...* (Warsaw 1867) (Massalski, 2007:83; Słowiński, 1992:181-196; Schiller, 1998:244). Similarly, Serafim Józef Jakowski, a graduate from The University of Warsaw, a teacher of ancient languages in a gymnasium in Piotrków; upon the receipt of a pension he was asked to continue his work as a teacher of the Greek (3 hours weekly) and Polish language (19 hours weekly)⁴². There were also cases of employing teachers who had left Russia already as pensioners. Kazimierz Pollewicz did so. He was a graduate from The University of Sankt Petersburg and a teacher of ancient languages. For the length of his service, he received a pension in Russia in 1861. Afterwards he returned to the Kingdom of Poland where he worked in gymnasiums in Warsaw until 1876⁴³.

Lecturing in private schools was the most common activity among retired teachers. Such occupation can be documented for ten people. Classical languages teacher Henryk Goldberg stood out among other teachers as he was one of the few who, after graduating from a university (Warsaw General School), received a Ph. D. in University of Leipzig in 1870. At that time, he taught in the VI All-boys Gymnasium in Warsaw. He received a pension in 1904. Since 1905 he would be taking part in curricular and organizational works for private schools in the Kingdom of Poland as well as teaching Latin and Greek in Chrzanowski's Gymnasium in Warsaw (Wąsik, 1959-1960:207, Błaszczuk, 2003:133). Ignacy Jezierski was another teacher entitled to lecture in private schools subject: both historical and philological subjects as well as Russian language. Prior to his retirement, Jezierski taught the Polish language in a gymnasium in Płock. The same applies to Ilja Kondratowicz, a tutor of ancient languages in Mariampol, Pińczów, Płock and Lublin in which city he was given a pension in 1874. I. Jezierski was

⁴² Szkoła Główna Warszawska (1862-1869), vol. 1, Wydział Filologiczno-Historyczny, Kraków 1900, p. 272; AP Łódź, Akta osobowe, sygn. 1732, k. 34-50; AP Łódź, Akta osobowe, sygn. 1732, k. 34-50.

⁴³ Российский государственный исторический архив в Санкт Петербурге (hereinafter: RGIA), f. 733, op. 225, d. 389, p. 27-34.

a graduate from The University of Moscow where he studied at the philological faculty. His pedagogical career started in 1840 when Ignacy. Jezierski worked as a teacher of Polish in a school in the Muranow district in Warsaw. After a year, he was transferred to Pinczów and from 1862 he worked in a county school in Łęczycza (Massalski, 2007:183)⁴⁴. I. Kondratowicz graduated in 1857 from the University of Kiev, the philological faculty. Prior to starting his work in some gymnasiums in the Kingdom of Poland, he taught in Grodno and Telsze⁴⁵. The permission to teach the Polish language and the entitlement to work in private schools was granted to Piotr Skrzypiński as well. He kept on working in several secondary schools in Warsaw until his retirement. After that, he taught in many private schools: J.N. Leszczyński's, Barszczewski's, Augustyn Szmurła's, Jan Pankiewicz's and Wojciech Górski's (who was his son-in-law) (Skręt, 1998:484-485)⁴⁶. In turn, Józef Wabner, as a pensioner – since 1900, lectured in the General Chrzanowski's Gymnasium and in W. Górski's gymnasium. During The Great War he was a tutor in Józefa Gagatnicka's boarding school. He completed theological and philosophical studies at the University of Wrocław. As a graduate, he used to teach Latin in Łomża, Łowicz, Częstochowa, Kielce, Suwałki and Warsaw. Although senile, he still managed to work in free, post-war Poland where he taught Latin in a state all-boys gymnasium and in a state all-girl gymnasium between 1919 and 1922. He died in 1925, having lived 85 years (Artymiak, 1961:544-546)⁴⁷. Ignacy Józef Kowalski, after completing studies at the University of Petersburg, since 1846, taught mathematics and physics in the Higher Real School in Kalisz, between 1849-1850 he worked in a gymnasium in Suwałki. Subsequently, he returned to Kalisz where he kept on working until 1881. After retiring, he became a tutor in the Edward Pawłowicz's Real School in Kalisz⁴⁸. Between 1908-1909, Adrian Lutrzykowski was a head teacher of a private all-boys school in Warsaw. His pedagogical career started after he had graduated from the Clerical Academy in Kazan. At first, he taught in the Theological Seminary in Psków. In 1866, he moved to the Kingdom of Poland where he became a gymnasium teacher in Siedlce and later in Mariampol. In 1888, he was appointed a head master of elementary schools in the Lodz Academic Directorate of the Warsaw Academic District. Lutrzykowski worked in this post until 1909 when he retired (Znamenskij, 1892: 390).

Retired teachers were also allowed to create schools of their own. This was particularly common for pedagogues living and working in small towns, where the reorganization of the education system resulted in some minor secondary schools, like powiat secondary schools, being closed. Five teachers received this privilege. Antoni Dionizy Osuchowski, a graduate from Additional Pedagogical Courses in Warsaw and a teacher of sciences, was one of them. From 1850, he

⁴⁴ „Cirkulâr po upravleniû Varšavskim Učebnym Okrugom”, Varšava 1873, p. 385; *ibid.* 1875, p. 131.

⁴⁵ AP Płock, zesp. Gimnazjum Męskie, sygn. 18, k. 82-85; „Cirkulâr” 1874, p. 250, 396.

⁴⁶ „Cirkulâr” 1875, p. 53; *ibid.* 1876, p. 19.

⁴⁷ „Kurier Warszawski” 1925, No. 16 of January 16, 1925.

⁴⁸ „Gazeta Kaliska” No. 29 of April 2/14, 1894, p. 2; AP Kalisz, Inspektor Gimnazjum Kaliskiego, sygn. 20. k. n1b.

worked as a teacher in the following places: in Końskie, Lublin, Hrubieszów, and from 1868 in Wieluń. After the powiat school in Wieluń had been closed in 1869, Osuchowski ran a four-form all-boys private school there⁴⁹. Franciszek Tworowski was permitted to set his own school as well. He was a Polish language and history teacher who worked in a powiat school in Opole, in Biała and in the Girls Education Institute in Puławy, respectively. From 1862 he taught in a gymnasium in Piotrków. He retired in 1877 and received a pension for his thirty years in service. That year he also started to run a private four-form all-boys school in Konin. Due to ill health, he moved to Warsaw where he died⁵⁰.

Two teachers led the very first correctional facility for juveniles on the Polish soil, in Studzieniec, which at the time went by the name of the Correctional Home of the Association of Agricultural Settlements and Crafts Shelters⁵¹. This is one of the oldest institutions of this kind in Poland which is still operating. The former of the above mentioned pedagogues, Ludwik Ostrowski, a graduate of the Roman Catholic Theological Academy in Warsaw, having retired, became the inspector of the correctional facility in Studzieniec. Interestingly, right after he graduated, Ostrowski did not work in educational services but as an opera singer in the Vienna State Opera. It was not until 1861 that he took a teaching job in a powiat German-Russian school in Łódź where he taught Latin and Polish. After a year, he moved to Warsaw where he kept on teaching. A series of transfers followed starting from 1862: in 1862 he worked in a gymnasium in Łomża; subsequently, from 1864 in Siedlce, then in Pinczów and in Mariampol (Oleędzki, 1927:294)⁵². The latter of the teachers mentioned above, Władysław Skłodowski, was a teacher of sciences in several secondary schools in Warsaw. Between 1888-1890, he was a headmaster of the Correctional Facility for Juveniles in Studzieniec. Following this period of time, he started to teach privately in Warsaw, yet to the end of his days, he remained a member of the Agricultural Settlements Board. He died in 1902 in Warsaw (Massalski, 2007:382-383)⁵³.

In some cases, teachers tried to improve their financial situation by offering tuition and renting rooms to students, which, as a matter of fact, required obtaining a special permit from education authorities. Antoni Mrajski, who retired in 1875 after twenty year of work, was one of those teachers who obtained such a consent. After having graduated in 1851 from The University of Moscow, Mrajski would be teaching natural history and universal geography

⁴⁹ "Biesiada Literacka" 1904, No. 20, s. 398; RGIA, f. 733, op. 198, d. 34, k. 21, Spisok lic uvo-lennyh ot dolžnostej ot 1 avgusta 1869 vsledstvie uprazdneniâ lenčycckogo, velunskogo i mlavskogo uездnyh učiliš.

⁵⁰ AP Łódź, GM in Piotrków, ref. No. 617, k. n1b; "Tydzień", 1882, No. 13, p. 5; „Cirkulâr" 1877, p. 141, 183-184; *ibid.* 1878, p. 184.

⁵¹ „Warsaw Courier" reported that Studzieniec, a settlement near Ruda Guzowska, had been accepted by protocol by the Agricultural Settlement Board. composed of: the president of the board, senator Wieczorkowski, boards delegates Bernard Handtkie and Jaszowski and professor Miklaszewski. The teacher who has already been mentioned, Franciszek Tworowski was appointed an honorary member of the association on 21 April 1873. „Warsaw Courier" 1873, issue 89, p. 2.

⁵² „Biesiada Literacka" 1892, No. 9, p. 131, *ibid.* 1889, No. 13, p. 203.

⁵³ „Przegląd Pedagogiczny" 1902, No. 147, p. 146-147.

in a gymnasium in Grodno. Afterwards, he moved to the Kingdom of Poland and until 1873 he worked in a gymnasium in Radom. As we read in an announcement published in *Warsaw Courier* in 1886, Mrajski offered lodgings for students of private schools⁵⁴. Another teacher living in Warsaw, Karol Kuhn, offered tutoring in German. He completed a gymnasium in Brunsberg (Braniewo) in Prussia and was licensed as a German teacher by the Examination Committee in Warsaw. He started teaching in a powiat real school subsidiary to a local gymnasium in Radom. This was between 1851 and 1854. Subsequently, he would teach in Siedlce and Radom. Between 1868-1872 K. Kuhn worked in a pro-gymnasium in Sandomierz where he received a pension. Afterwards he moved to Warsaw. In an announcement published in *Warsaw Courier* he notified his move to 17 Chmielna Street (Massalski, 2007:232)⁵⁵. Konstanty Tołwiński was yet another tutor. He was a graduate of the Additional Courses in Warsaw. He became a mathematics teacher and was working in Warsaw, Mariampol, Lublin, Krasnymstaw and in Lipno, respectively. Upon the receipt of a pension, he worked with students wanting to take entry exams to a gymnasium junior class and to a preparatory gymnasium class. Tuitions were taking place in Tołwiński's apartment at 48 Chmielna Street (Massalski, 2007:432)⁵⁶. A home teacher permit was also granted to Franciszek Anielewski who was a teacher of philological and historical subjects in a powiat school in Łowicz, and subsequently, between 1866 and 1868, in a gymnasium in Lublin. On 24 October 1868, he achieved additional qualifications and a permit to work as a Latin home teacher. From the certificate of his re-marriage in 1881 in Warsaw, we learn that Tołwiński was a head teacher of a private school back then⁵⁷.

Several retired teachers pursued their passions and interests or devoted themselves to activities that could bring extra income. Antoni Franciszek Rogalewicz, after completing studies at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics of the University of Petersburg became a teacher in a powiat real school in Warsaw. Transferred to Kielce in 1854, he was appointed a member of a committee of two whose task was to develop a project for the chemical vocabulary. In 1859, Rogalewicz returned to Warsaw and taught in several secondary schools. After twenty five years in service, he received a pension in 1876. Having retired, Rogalewicz attempted to catalogue and organize W. Branicki's library. Unfortunately, due to progressing blindness, he had to quit. Rogalewicz died in Warsaw in 1886 (Massalski, 2007:354-355)⁵⁸. Szymon Tadeusz Włoszek pursued entirely different goals. He studied at the Faculty of Philology and History in the Warsaw General School between 1864 – 1868 and earned a master's degree in 1870. Following graduation, he became a teacher of ancient languages in several

⁵⁴ RGIAP, f. 733, op. 225, d. 326, k. 77-81; Lietuvos Valstybinis Istorijos Archyvas (LVIA), f. 567, op. 4, s.v. 943, k. 3; „Kurier Warszawski” 1886, No. 232, p. 7.

⁵⁵ AP Radom, RDS specj. 313. X, k. 3; Cirkulâr 1868, s. 86; tamże 1873, s. 487; „Kurier Warszawski” 1875, No. 160, p. 5.

⁵⁶ AP Lublin, DSzL, Akta osobowe, sygn. 3038, p. 4-23; „Kurier Warszawski” 1886, No. 232, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Rocznik Urzędowy Królestwa Polskiego, Warszawa 1863, s. 177; Marriage Certificate No. 59 of 1881, Warszawa, parafia Wszystkich Świętych (All Saints Parish), p. 72. http://www.geneteka.genealodzy.pl/index.php?op=gt&rid=A&search_lastname=zochowski&exac=&w=71wa

⁵⁸ „Cirkulâr” 1876, p. 41, 42.

Warsaw gymnasiums. Subsequently, between 1883 – 1903, he taught in Mariampol. Then, after retiring, he moved to Kielce where he was the initiator and the main organizer of the Museum of Polish Tourist Association, which, in turn, gave birth to the National Museum in Kielce. For twenty five years he served as a custodian of the said establishment. He gathered a collection of geological, natural and archaeological souvenirs. He would also assemble national exhibits, primarily concerning the January Uprising. Włoszek himself was an insurgent and fought under the command of Marian Langiewicz (Pająk 2009:501)⁵⁹.

Thanks to Wojciech Jastrzębowski, a retired natural sciences teacher, waste grounds by railway tracks between Warsaw – Bydgoszcz and in Bydgoszcz were planted with trees. *Warsaw Courier* reported that “therefore on each and every station of both of said two railroads fifteen square feet of ground has been assigned for the purpose of planting spruce and larch trees and a special fund for the purchase of seeds has been raised. On these specially selected areas Mr Jastrzębowski, with the aid of gatenen’s children and some minor servants, will plant those rare and beneficial kinds of trees [...] Previous accomplishments of this venerable pensioner in Feliksów on Bug serve as a guarantee of a prospective success of this undertaking as well”⁶⁰. Planting new trees and reforestation of damaged former sylvan areas were his great passion. W. Jastrzębowski, having finished his studies at the University of Warsaw, was an assistant professor in the Physics Department of the same university. After the November Uprising, the university was closed and Jastrzębowski worked at the Institute of Agronomy in Marymont near Warsaw. Between 1858 and 1860, he used to teach in various secondary school in Warsaw. He was also a member of several scientific societies, inter alia of *The Warsaw Society of Friends of Learning*, *Cracow Scientific Society* and of *The Imperial Economic Society* in Petersburg. His oeuvre contains numerous publication on agriculture; he was one of progenitors of ergonomics and he constructed the sundial in the Royal Łazienki Park in Warsaw. Moreover, in collaboration with professor Michał Szubert, he co-created the Botanical Gardens in Warsaw (Massalski, 2007:177-178; Dymek, 2002:195-214).

Władysław Połkotycki dedicated his life to charity. He was a graduate of the University of Kiev and a teacher of mathematics and physics in several gymnasiums in Warsaw in the years 1864 – 1891. Having retired, he worked for the Charitable Society. In 1897, he became a head teacher of all-girls trading courses organized by Izabela Smolikowska and Teodora Raczkowska, respectively. In 1891, he succeeded Aleksander Szumowski as a manager of *The Pedagogical Review*⁶¹.

Apart from W. Połkotycki, I. Boczyliński was also a contributor to several magazines, *The Pedagogical Review* including. It is also known that Wasilij Domański co-worked with editorial offices of some papers in Wieluń. He was a graduate of the Clerical Academy in Petersburg; afterwards, he taught

⁵⁹ Commemorative book of the meeting of former alumni of the Warsaw General School on the 40th anniversary of its establishment. Warszawa 1905, p. 79.

⁶⁰ „Kurier Warszawski” 1873, No. 89, p. 2.

⁶¹ Vasil’ev Ā. I., *Istoričeskaâ zapiska po slučaiu 50 let Varšavskoj Mužskoj Ginnnazii 1862–1912*, b.m., 1912; “Biesiada Literacka” 1902, No. 40, p. 279; *ibid.* 1903, No. 31, p. 99.

Orthodox and Historical subjects in the Theological Seminary in Wologod. Between 1862 and 1863, he taught Hebrew. From 1863, he was in service of the Ministry of Education in one of gymnasiums in the Wieluń Academic District. The said school was closed in 1868, yet W. Domański was not discharged until eight years later. Then, in 1876, he moved to Petersburg⁶².

Some of the retired teacher continued their intellectual pursuits started earlier on, during their professional careers. One of those was Antoni Celichowski, who came from the Grand Duchy of Posen. He obtained higher education at the University of Berlin. From 1860, he taught Latin in German schools in Warsaw; subsequently, from 1878 to 1891, he worked in a progymnasium in Sandomierz. Apart from becoming involved in numerous charitable actions in Warsaw, he also was an author of textbooks, for example: *Children's friend or the second part of handwriting and reading textbook for older kids* (Warsaw 1897) and *The German ABCs after the method of simultaneous writing and reading* (Warsaw 1894) (Massalski, 2007:100)⁶³.

Writing was also Wincenty Dawid's passion which he took to as a pensioner. Dawid, having graduated from the University of Sankt Petersburg, became a Polish language teacher in various gymnasiums in Suwałki, Lublin and Płock. He received a pension in 1874. Later, in the 1880s, he published a booklet entitled *On the moral plague*. The said piece of writing was well-acclaimed by positivists, yet lambasted by more conservative reviewers and by the clergy who criticized it on the pages of *General Review* and *Catholic Review*. He also published his memoirs in 1890 in *From university memoir* on the pages of *Literary Review's* insert entitled *Motherland* (Warsaw 1890, issue 39). In 1890, a collection of coverage texts from the Siege of Vienna authored by Wincenty Dawid was put in print. It was entitled *Rakus Vienna by the Turks besieged* (Warsaw 1883) (Massalski, 1996:7-91)⁶⁴.

In conclusion, it is an easily noticed fact that most of the retired teachers engaged in activities closely related to their former line of work and type of higher education received. Their intellectual pursuits and social activities seemed to stem from their need for active engagement but also, as it can be assumed, from their sense of a mission they had to fulfill in the times when the Polish character of education was being gradually diminished.

⁶² AP Łódź, Kaliska Dyrekcja Szkolna. Sygn. 1696, k. nlb; Rodoskij A., Biografičeskij slovar' pervyh XXVIII-mi kursov S.Peterburgskoj Akademii 1814–1869, Sankt Peterburg 1907, vol. 1, p. 144.

⁶³ RGIAP, f. 733, op. 225, d. 536, k. 27-33.

⁶⁴ „Przegląd Pedagogiczny” 1897, No. 6, p. 95.

Social and Demographic Aspects of Getting Old in Poland. Young People's Attitudes towards Different Fields of Elderly People's Lives – Report Based on My Own Research

Introduction

Old people in Poland are a progressive and growing category. According to the Eurostat data, one in six Poles is about sixty or older and one in eight is sixty five or more⁶⁵. (Eurostat 2013) On these grounds, there are around 10 million elderly people in our country. This number has been diagnosed to raise rapidly and until 2050 is expected to be estimated at even 17 million. Of course, it is essential to remember that these figures are only assumptions and depending on many different variables they will certainly be corrected and specified more accurately in the future. These numbers are enormous, as nowadays many people from the 1950's population boom have retired – voluntarily or because they had to. And as a consequence, just around the year 2050, children of the second population boom will be ready to receive pension benefits. These are the children who were born around the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Social aspects of getting old in Poland

When it comes to social aspects of getting old in Poland, scientist emphasize that we need to remember that there are consequences not only of this demographic process, but economic and political as well. There will be significant differences among social consequences of aging in economically developed countries with strong lobby groups which are able to make the government notice their needs, and countries with just developing economies without any groups safeguarding elderly people's interests.

Secondly, there will be also pivotal discrepancies among countries where blood lines have the most crucial role in building proper relations among people and social groups, and others where social work division is most common.

⁶⁵ Data taken from the official Eurostat website, March 2013.

Thirdly, the process of getting old will look quite differently where religious norms are the most important social life regulator and where, on the contrary, secular institutions play the first role. As a consequence, the most important demographic processes and phenomena that certainly influence the societies getting old are:

1. The average life expectancy is getting longer so the ageing phase is longer as well. Nowadays the demographic and economical ageing is definitely changing and taking it up on the time line,
2. Discrepancies in average life expectancy between men and women. These days women live longer, however this situation is supposed to be reduced in the future, and the differences should not be as high as today (which is about 5 years to the women's advantage); such situation causes feminization of nations on the mass scale now and loneliness of old women, especially those around seventy and older,
3. Increase in the absolute number of elderly people, that is not only their percentage in the population is getting higher but actual their number as well,
4. Finally, the changes in the proportion between the number of old people and the total population (Szatur – Jaworska, Błędowska, Dziegielewska, 2006: 242).

Gerontologists are looking for social consequences of the aging of nations among the phenomena and processes happening beyond individuals, on different levels of social life. There are three such levels: microlevel, the lowest one which is created by families, the medium level is connected with the locality, and the highest one - macrolevel – covers whole nations and institutions.

The microlevel is related to disproportions among different age groups, decreasing number of children in families and increasing the number of adults, including old ones. It means that the family network of old people has gone down since there is fewer and fewer children and grandchildren and the average life expectancy is higher. Scientists assume that there will be more four-generation families and such phenomenon will be much common since there will be more old than young people. It is happening just now as it may be noticed that young women give birth to their first child around thirty and more often than in any other period in history this first child is their last. As a natural consequence of these processes families will not be able to fulfill their protective function which need to be ceded onto the specialized local or national institutions. Furthermore, a procreative function of the family has lately significantly changed. Few decades ago, this function was inevitably connected with sexual function. Nowadays, because of contraception, these two have been separated.

On the medium level there are also lots of factors which need to be taken into consideration. These are changes in the destinations of social institutions since fewer kindergartens and schools and more health centers or seniors' clubs will be needed. Local authorities and the government itself will have to consider space reorganizations as architectural barriers will need to be brought down, considering that elderly people are definitely less fit than the young. What is more, ageing people will need different kinds of services that will be available

in their place of stay. There are also two very important things which need to be sorted out. Firstly, the pension insurance which is a very pivotal issue since Poland is in the middle of a debate whether young generations will be able to pay for it or not. Secondly, creating local identity to strengthen the bond between generations which is underestimated in our country.

As far as the macrolevel is concerned, gerontologists point out few important issues, too. To begin with, the "graying of the votes" is taking place in the political sphere. As more and more people will be getting old, more of them will vote and make decisions influencing our country, which means that politicians from all political parties should take such demographic change into account and make their political programs more focused on the demands of the elderly, since old people's needs and expectations are quite different from those of the young. Besides, old voters are much more disciplined and interested in national politics than young people, so the stakes are high. Secondly, the model of social policy should be changed, from that concentrated on social benefits to the labor market. It is called going from a welfare state to a workfare state. Thirdly, local authorities and the government have to make elderly people feel economically safe during their old days and they need to seriously consider this situation now and not in a decade's time because it might be too late then. The social image of retirement needs to be changed, especially in Poland as we perceive it as the "necessary evil" that the young have to pay for the old, which is a completely false view of the reality, considering that old people used to work to live respectfully when as they get to their old age. Last but not least, a very sensitive issue must be considered very carefully: working places for retired people who wish to work. In Poland it is also a special situation since the media usually portray old people as stealing jobs from graduates. A new concept has also appeared that since people live longer, are healthier for longer, so they would like to work longer. It is natural process well-known in the western countries and new in Poland. As a consequence, we need to adjust to the situation where more mature people would like to continue their education, attend different kinds of professional courses, and stay in the labor market for longer.

Different aspects of daily living of elderly people

It should be taken into account that old people need to have many diverse aspects of everyday life organized, such as medical treatment at a sufficient level, technological assistance⁶⁶, which will make their life not only easier but will enable them to communicate better, or on-call assistance with everyday activities, such as, for example, taking a bath (Jeger 2004:5–22; Ostlund, 2004:44-62).

⁶⁶ According to my research conducted for purpose of this article, elderly people in Poland have many problems with using electrical equipment such as TVs, DVDs or radios. These difficulties involve plugging these devices in, checking the signal, loading the channels and having additional functions which make this type of equipment easier to use. I advise studying such texts as: Britt, *Social Science Research on Technology and the Elderly-Does it exist?* "Science Studies", Vol. 17.

Secondly, seniors need to their free time filled with activities and the stress level lowered. Moreover, they must live independently– if it is possible from the point of view of their health, not only taking care of their grandchildren but having a life on their own, meeting with their friends, and even having their own problems. We should not forget that many gerontologists, geriatrists and demographers have made their own classifications of old people, according to which this category comprises people around 60 years old, or those aged 85 or more.

These actions need to be taken not only for the present, but for the future as well. Besides, there are lots of areas in which old people would like to be active in – not just the medical one. Elderly people may be willing to continue working professionally, to fulfill their passions, or spend their pastime actively. Old people should not be marginalized because they choose to spend their late years in a way contrary to what most people believe they should be doing, which is sitting at home, watching TV, taking care of grandchildren and practically awaiting for death. Unfortunately, it is most often these activities which are attributed to elderly people in Poland. According to research conducted by M. Halicka and J. Halicki, seniors claimed that most often they spend their pastime passively: watching TV - 84%, listening to the radio - 61%, reading newspapers - 56%, going for walks - 52%, doing small works in the garden - 39%, meeting with friends - 35%, reading books - 35%, doing various crafts - 13%, enjoying trips - 5%, social activity - 5%, parish activity - 5%, meetings in the Senior's Club - 3%, going to the cinema, theatre, opera - 1% and lastly, painting or making music - 1% (Halicka, Halicki, 2002: 206). As it may be seen, up to a certain point, Polish old people prefer passive ways of spending their free time. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, Polish elderly people very often visit different kind of medical specialists, secondly they help looking after their grandchildren and, last but not least, they are too ill or tired to spend their free time in a different way than sitting and watching TV or reading undemanding books and approachable newspapers.

It should be perceived that Poland is rather unique when it comes to talking about elderly people. Of course, nowadays the perception of old people has been changing, yet until recently they have only been seen their grandchildren's minders. Most people in Poland think that an old person who got to the retirement age should accept the pension straight away, give up their job and start looking after their grandchildren. As a result, old people were treated as ones who did not have any right to decide what kind of life they would like to lead, what they would do during their retirement and whether they would be willing to sacrifice their free time to help raise their grandchildren. Old people were denied doing things they did not have time to do during their career and when they were bringing up their own children. Younger generations, daughters and sons, were convinced in most of the cases⁶⁷ that, having retired, their parents

⁶⁷ My research showed that grandparent helped bring up 94% of young respondents at some time in their youth. 68% stated that their grandparents, usually grandmothers, took care of them when they were born, to help their parents, especially mothers, go back to work and not lose the job. 89% of young people who took part in my research said that they would want their parents to help them raise their children if they decided to have a child one day

would automatically take care of their grandchildren, sacrificing long hours every day. Needless to say, this was of much help to young parents, as the care of grandchildren provided by grandparents was for long hours, free and a natural thing to do. Such a situation was very common in Poland: the older generation took care of the youngest generation when the middle one was working to support their children and old parents. Nobody ever complained out loud. If there were any complaints, they were uttered quietly and without further consequences.

Looking after grandchildren- an issue of discrepancy

Today, the image of an old person in the media and in the society has changed significantly. We do not call someone who retired around 55-65 years old “an old person” as he or she is too young to be seen as old. Nowadays someone who is around 80 is old and is perceived that way. There are many reasons that are behind this situation. To begin with, the average life expectancy has been longer now: it is 78 for men and even over 80 for women. Secondly, people who are retired do not treat themselves as old, moreover, they are not seen that way in the society. Furthermore, grandparents do not see their sense of life in retirement and raising grandchildren but in other activities. One of them, worth mentioning, is travelling, so popular in Western Europe and in the United States but still not widely available in Poland. Of course, there are two conditions which need to be fulfilled to make a trip safe and satisfying: good health and enough funds gathered during their professional career. Besides, old people want to develop their passions, interests and simply rest. However, resting and relaxing during retirement is a subjective thing, when taking care of grandchildren is expected from grandparents. My research showed that 93% of old people interviewed had been well aware that they were expected to take care of their grandchildren, 77% did that regularly and 56% said that they were tired of that activity⁶⁸. The aspect mentioned above has been researched in my interviews, especially in the context of free time by spent elderly people when it comes to providing care and raising grandchildren. One of the respondents, a 68-year-old woman with higher education, who had been retired for a few years said something which is the best illustration of the raising grandchildren phenomenon in our country: “(...) When I was going to retire a few years ago I was quite afraid of that moment since I had been widowed for 12 years. (...) I thought that I would have to do nothing at home but how wrong I was since there is always something to do at home. I started doing some minor household jobs, going to the medical specialists, I took to walking and I was encouraged to sign myself up for the Senior’s Club in my neighborhood. There was of course occasions that my daughter or my son dropped off preschool-age grandchildren at my apartment

or their parents have already been helping them since they had their children(the young respondents were aged between 19 and 36).

⁶⁸ 49 old people were interviewed during my research. The necessary condition was that they were grandparents. There were 27 grandmothers and 22 grandfathers.

to be looked after, which was quite a normal situation and had never bothered me before. (...) However, the situation changed when they started bringing me my grandchildren almost every day, not for a few hours, like it used to be, but whole days. At first, I was quite happy that my grandchildren came to see me every day because I had a great contact with them, but later it turned out that they would come to stay with me every day after school, they would stay for dinner and sometimes supper and their parents picked them up in the evening. I was tired, fed up and had absolutely no time for myself, not mention free time to do anything. I had to cook every day to give them fresh meals and since they were very lively children I had to be healthy and strong to catch up with them, which was very tiring for me. My daughter and son seemed not to notice my being tired but after six months had passed I was brave enough to tell them that I did not want my grandchildren coming over every day as I was extremely tired of this. Besides, I wanted to have some time for myself and I could not make an appointment with the doctor in the afternoon because my grandchildren were at my place every afternoon. Hearing what I had to say my children were really astonished and said that since I was retired what else I was supposed to do apart from taking care of my grandchildren. My daughter did not talk to me for two weeks. She stopped coming to my place with my granddaughters. After two weeks she came because she had no choice but to leave the girls with me as she had something important to do. My son got used to me having my free time more easily. He claimed that he simply had not realized I needed some”.

I quoted the whole statement since it is typical of the rest of the research conducted. Almost all of the retired women admitted spending too much time taking care of their grandchildren and to certain extent having held a conversation about having too little space to do what they wanted to. Such situations are meaningful since Polish parents deny their retired parents a right to have free time. They do not realize and it simply does not occur to them that grandparents have a right to lead their retirement life the way they want to and not put taking care of their grandchildren first.

This phenomenon is easy to interpret in Poland. Polish people until very recently were used to living in multigenerational families where grandparents were taking care of new born grandchildren whereas parents were going back to paid work or farming, and also taking care of the eldest members of the family. Today, the situation is completely different. Newly married couples or people living in free relationships want to live on their own as soon as possible, without their parents or grandparents, so they get high mortgages and move out. As a consequence grandparents and even parents sometimes do not stand a chance of seeing their grandchildren. Of course, it is worth mentioning, if grandparents, and usually grandmothers, are willing to take care of their grandchildren. Looking after grandchildren is time-consuming, tiring and most of all the responsibility for the grandchildren is sometimes overwhelming since they are not directly ours. Grandmothers frequently agree to take care of their grandchildren rather automatically, until the children are old enough to stay home alone for some time until they parents come back home from work. Grandmothers look after their grandchildren since they are well aware that parents do not have

enough money to hire a nanny and they do not wish to leave their children with a stranger. These days, finding a reliable nanny is a very hard task and I would even risk a statement that it is almost impossible. Such voices have also appeared in my research⁶⁹.

Growing old- a demographic analysis

It is extremely important for each country to try to know in advanced what the demographic processes will look like. Its aim is to look for possibilities to be up to societal expectations when the society starts to grow old. To be able to judge correctly the changes in societal needs of old people, three aspects of the process of getting old must be taken into consideration. Firstly, the demographic description of population of the post-productive age must be completed. Secondly, the expected pace of the demographic process of the society aging and characteristic features of that process must be determined. And last but not least, changes of ratios between the number of people in the productive and post-productive age in the society must be identified in order to define the best financial ways of providing benefits for elderly people (Szatur – Jaworska, Błędowki, Dziegielewska, 2006: 221). The aging of societies within the demographic meaning is connected with the increasing percentage of old people. This process is mainly characteristic for Europe but it also occurs in the North America and some parts of Asia. For example, in 1990, there were 10.2% of old people in Poland, in 2003 – 12.8% and it has been estimated that in 2013 there are 14% of old people in Poland so according to these figures we are considered as “ an old society”.

There are many reasons why modern societies are aging and there are more and more people over 60 years old, and the percentage of people over 80 years old is growing. Not only gerontological literature gives reasons for this situation. Firstly, fewer and fewer people are born. It causes a decline in the young part of the society in the overall population. Nowadays, the birth rate in Poland is around 1.2. It is a very low rate, yet in 1980s it was around 2.13. It means that a Polish woman in a productive age is statistically supposed to give birth to 1.2 child. There is a majority of Polish women who decide not to have children before 30, not to be pregnant at all, or spend their life alone not being in a formal or informal relationship and without having any children. Today, young people of Poland more often choose to live not in legally or socially legitimized relationships such as heterosexual marriages but in other alternative forms of marital and familial life. Cohabitation and single life have become quite popular in Poland. Childless marriages are an accepted model. There are also patchwork families which can be formed where the partners have been divorced, widowed

⁶⁹ All 27 young people - 17 girls and 10 boys - who wished to take part in my research were asked whether they would like to have a nanny or a grandparent to take care of their children and 92% answered that they would definitely prefer grandparents since they are mostly trustworthy, responsible and caring.

or are single⁷⁰, and many others (Fijewski, 1997; Kay, 2008; Monkiewicz, 2000; Pa-przycka, 2008; Pietkiewicz, 2001; Ruskiewicz, 2008; Szarlik, 2001; Żurek, 2008) The second reason why it is mostly European societies that are getting old is the decrease in the mortality rate, especially in the younger groups. This is because medical care is now more advanced and neonatologists can save even 20-week-old infants. If a young person dies, it is usually the result of a fatal disease or an accident.

Thirdly, the extension of human life and as a consequence the higher number of old people who are in a good medical health since the medicine is progressing and advancing day by day. Last but not least the migration processes which in some urban or mostly rural areas leads to a decrease in the number of young people in comparison with the old ones.

The decreasing birth rate is not only characteristic for European countries but many countries around the world. In Poland, the first big baby boom took place in 1948-1956 and then when these baby-boomers had children, i.e. in 1978-1987. Since then the birth rate has been gradually dropping and in the recent years the mortality rate has been higher than the birth rate. As a consequence, in 1950s the population growth rate was extremely high, whereas around the year 2000 it dropped below 0 and now has a negative value. As it may be derived from the figures in many statistical yearbooks, the interchanging periods of high and low birth rate has been characteristic of Poland since the end of World War II. One of the after-effect of the aging of the society is the growing "demographic dependency ratio". It describes how many people of post-productive age (60 or over for women/65 or over for men) there are to the number of people of productive age (18-59 for women/18-64 for men). In Poland, this coefficient was 13 in 1950, 24 - in 2002, in 2020 it is expected to be 36, and in 2025 - even as high as 40⁷¹. These are significantly high rates which require steps which should have been undertaken by the Polish government a long time ago and which have been not put in motion. That is why 20 and 30-year-olds will be paying a quite high price for the inefficiency of those in charge. A pension system reform - consistent and difficult for the Polish society - should have been implemented, since money from workers' social insurance contributions are simply insufficient to cover current obligations. It is obvious that changes in the demographic structure of the society influence the country economy and social politics which operate like

⁷⁰ There are lots of types of alternative forms of marriage and family life. Some of them are more socially acceptable today than others. These different, sometimes uncommon or hard to perceive types of relationships between men and women or homosexual relationships have become more frequent since the younger generation works more, is busier, wants to have a house, cars, their own savings, has a much more consumerist and demanding approach to life and is individualized. As Anthony Giddens said, we live in a reflexive and flexible society, we cannot really be sure that the values we share today will be also shared tomorrow. Everything is so changeable and fast. The most common types of alternative forms of marriage and family that can be noticed in the Polish societal landscape are: free cohabitation relationships, single people, childless marriages, homosexual relationships, patchwork families, mixed-age, mixed-religion or mixed-nationality marriages, or even swingers. There are of course such alternatives of relationships which exist, however they are not talked about as ex friends or friends' tribes in different configurations.

⁷¹ www.stat.gov.pl, data recorded In March 2013.

a self-regulating system. Moreover, people live longer nowadays and it is a noticeable phenomenon in every European country.

The high rate of old people in the European postindustrial societies is a consequence of disadvantageous demographic processes taking place in the past and occurring now. The demographers called them first and the second demographic transformations⁷². The first demographic transformation was connected with the change in the patterns of childbirth. Before 1950s, people were having many children when they wanted to. It was called "extravagant" or "wasteful" reproduction. It could have been described by having high and changeable mortality rate, short period of life expectancy, high and unstable productive rate and large number of children. It was replaced by economical reproduction. It is characterized by low and quite stable mortality, reproduction rates and long lives. As one of the consequences of this, more old people started to live to 85 and longer, there were fewer children born since women started giving birth later and later as priorities have changed. To put it briefly, fewer children born and more elderly people living in good health to ripe old age result in the number of old people continuing to increase (Kotowska, 1999; Okólski, 1990).

Young people' s attitudes towards the old ones - have we changed?

My research was conducted in February and March 2013 in Kielce in Poland. Kielce is a city of almost 200,000 citizens, which means it is of medium size. It was qualitative research based on face-to-face interviews. They were divided into two parts. Firstly, the interviews were done with grandparents and secondly, with their grandchildren. As a result, there were 27 direct interviews with young people between 19 and 36, 17 women and 10 men, and 49 interviews with grandparents: 27 grandmothers and 22 grandfathers. The main line of these interviews was the twenty-question questionnaire.

I will only mention most interesting or striking information which was obtained during those interviews.

The most pivotal issue which was asked during the interview was if young people need old people and what do the latter give to the young generation if, according to the responders, they pass something at all. 87% young responders said that the older generation is very important as they pass on their life experience, help looking after grandchildren, give money for name days or birthdays, cook dinners after school and help you when you need help and you are afraid to ask parents for it. It is worth mentioning that the rest of the young respondents said they did not see anything useful in elderly people. Old ones give young nothing but complaints and interfering in their private business. These were really unfavorable statements, yet later in next control questions it turned out that these respondents did not have a good contact with their grandparents since they were strict or demanding towards them, or they only knew their grandmother or grandfather from their parents' stories which were unfavorable.

⁷² In the demographic or sociological literature, these transformations may be also called demographic transition.

Secondly, elderly people were asked the same question: whether they needed young people or more specifically their grandchildren for some kinds of activities. All of them answered affirmatively, however only 43% were able to answer what they needed young people for. The answers were mostly connected with helping old people during serious illnesses, visiting them and helping to keep touch with the world affairs or helping them to operate some electric devices.

On the other hand, it is quite comforting that young people realized a great deal of problems that old people come across in their everyday life. When they were asked to name them, they did not have any problems and usually said: ignorance from the society - 87%, rejection from their family - 74%, having trouble with making appointment with medical specialists - 69%, financial difficulties - 62%, loneliness and sometimes depression - 54%, accommodation problems - 39%, having trouble with public transport, such as getting from one place to another, and communication problems, such as not being able to understand today's language - 17%. Of course there were also answers such as too much free time or existential problems.

Moreover, I wanted to know if according to elderly persons it was easy to grow old in today's ruthless world. 86 % of the respondents stated that it was quite difficult to be an old person nowadays because people who worked professionally forgot that old people had also worked to get their retirement benefits, they did not get retired for nothing and their families claimed they had too much free time so they could start taking care of their grandchildren even every day. What is very interesting, young people who were asked exactly the same question answered that it was easy to grow old as the world was changing rapidly, so daily routines, such as cooking, cleaning or washing can be done for a person and you could choose what you wanted to do during your retirement. If an old person wants to rest he does it, if he wants to go somewhere, he goes. In the answers to this question it was very visible that most of the respondents were talking from the point of view of a young person, forgetting that an elderly one must deal for instance with health issues and sometimes mobility difficulties.

The thing which interested me most was how seniors spent their leisure time. When asked, they stated that their free time was definitely too short. They usually used it to go to medical specialists - 98%, taking care of their grandchildren - 87%, watching TV or resting - 78%. According to the answers of the young people, the old people did nothing during their past time (there were even three answers that "(...) they sit and stare at the wall."), watch TV, read newspapers or books, gossip with neighbors and go to the church "much too often" - as one of my male respondents stated. These were the most frequent answers. Up to a point, the results of my research are similar to those mentioned in the gerontology literature.

Old people were also asked if they were satisfied with their current life. Here answers were different according to the age and health. Those who were around 60-65 and in good health claimed that they were happy, those around 80 and more and in poorer health said they were rather happy or unhappy and would want to change the time to live their life more wisely, bravely or two of them

even stated "differently". Needless to say, such thoughts are quite natural at that final stage of life.

I also wanted to know whether old people had good contact with their grandchildren. 65% claimed that it was very good, 22% - good or not bad, 4% - bad and 3% - very bad. Those who got on well with their grandchildren also said they were satisfied with their lives, their grandchildren visited them at least once a week or even more frequently, talk to them, ask them for advice so they felt "needed" as one of my respondents said. One of the grandfather stated: "(...) when my granddaughters come to me, they talk all the time about what happened at school, who said what. It is tiring but I am so happy that although they are teenagers they find time to come to an old sick man." There were many answers that elderly people appreciated the fact that though young people had their own businesses and troubles they still came to their grandparents to talk and visit them, not because they had to but because they wanted to.

Old people were also asked about the kind of social activity which should be undertaken to help them live nowadays. I must admit that my respondents had a lot of ideas here. 90% of them claimed and, it was the highest figure, that they needed many more specially trained medical specialists to cover their needs which were very demanding. Next, 76% said they would like some help in daily routines since their children, if they did not live with them and as we have already discussed, this is the most common situation nowadays, did not have time every day to come and help them properly. 71% claimed they would like some extra money for medicines, since they use treatments so often, or easier access to sanatoriums. 61% wished to spend their free time more actively or properly and meet new people of similar age. Old people also mentioned helping them to pay the bills, shopping, cleaning, washing or cooking. 12%, which is worth mentioning, said they would like to have someone to talk to since they feel lonely. These are usually old people whose part of the family lives in another city in Poland or left abroad looking for better life.

Additionally, as there are more and more old people, young people were asked if they would like to work with old people as their occupation: 91% answered no, 3% said yes, and the rest of the respondents did not know. This answer is very significant as it shows the true attitude of young people towards old persons. Most of us do not want to have anything to do with them. We are too short-sighted to see that some of us in 10, 20 or 30 years will be old and maybe ill ourselves and how would we feel if our children or beloved grandchildren refused to take care of us as the grandparent took care of the grandchild when it was little. It is a very painful question, however, it definitely needs to be asked loudly and clearly.

The answers to the question on how old people spent their free time are very similar to those received by other researchers, Halicki for instance. Old people from my research most often watch TV - 97%, go to church or parish meetings - 82%, go for walks - 81%, take care of grandchildren - 78%, rest and sleep - 67%. Unfortunately, this time is spent passively, but as it was mentioned above, everything depends on health and financial benefits, and also on the "state of

mind”, as a 67-year-old respondent said that his favorite way of spending free time was mountain walking.

There were also a question asked whether old people regretted something in their life and whether if they had an opportunity they would change it. 85% said they were happy the way they lived, however, if they had a chance they would work less, not worry so much about the future since it was unknown to them and in most of the cases they would not have any influence on it, they would teach children more respect for old people, they would take care of themselves and their health more, go on holidays more often, they would rest more and use work opportunities more bravely, and 17% claimed they would have liked to have more children. I believe that answers to this question are very crucial for young people as it is like a message on how they should live their lives so as not to regret anything when they are old.

The next question was related to the place of old people in today’s society. It is sad that 43% of young people do not see any place for old people in the Polish reality. They say that old people should retire and they would take their job places. Fortunately, almost the same percentage claim that they have a very important role of teachers of the past times, telling how it used to be, advisers and helpers - so that is comforting. Of course, there were also answers that elderly persons are nothing but bitter and grouchy.

Last but not least⁷³, old and young people were asked how elderly persons were perceived in the contemporary world. Old ones said they mostly felt unnecessary, useless and unwanted, however the young claimed that the social situation of old people was rather good in Poland as they did not need to worry about their retirement benefits since our country was rather reliable, they had good medical care and the life expectancy was increasing. The old people also mentioned that they sometimes felt as a problem as they may expect too much and their demands, usually with regard to their health, were too high.

Conclusion

Taking everything into account, the number of elderly people will be significantly increasing, not only in Poland but around the world. There are many factors which seem to be responsible for this: higher life expectancy, better medical care, more trained specialists, scientific knowledge about old people, food awareness, people taking better care of themselves, practicing sports to be fitter and consequently to live longer, medicines to fight against fatal diseases and sometimes the will and encouragement to live for the sake of your children and grandchildren.

Demographic and social aspects of getting old are very significant factors to help to prepare societies to deal with such phenomenon which has never occurred in the human history before. The western European societies are getting old - it is an undeniable fact. In a few years time, not decades, there will

⁷³ There were 17 questions in the direct questionnaire and every interview was about 1-1,5 long so all the details are not able to be given in such short piece of writing.

be so many old people that there will be huge economic, political and social problems connected with providing proper support for this increasing group of people, making them feel as a needed part not only of the Polish society but of the world's population, make their life easier from the architectural and mobility point of view, include them in local and governmental activities and let them build their new social identity. These are extremely pivotal issues over which not only scientists such as gerontologists, geriatrists or demographers are forced to debate today but more importantly people who are already dealing with such situation and who we may be able to learn from. The growing number of our beloved who are over seventy or eighty is a situation happening now in our country and not in some distant reality.

Situation of the Elderly in the Labour Market

Labor market in the face of changes

Unemployment is a phenomenon with a multi-faceted, complex character. It can be seen in terms of an object, as an economic problem or subject, or as a social issue. The first aspect means the analytical category of the labor market and then it indicates unrealized labor supply. It is the result of imbalance between labor supply and demand for labor, the employment absorption of economy. The second approach presents problems of individuals and groups who are willing to work but who, because of the lack of employment, are economically inactive. Work is an important part of human life and, therefore, its absence can be a tragedy for an individual and/or his/her family. Figure 1 shows the unemployment rate in selected countries in the years 1997-2011, at the end of December.

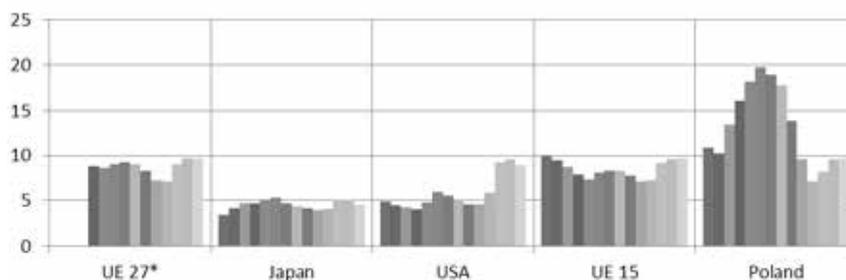


Fig.1 Unemployment rate in selected countries in 1997-2011 (*UE 27 2000-2011)

Source: Eurostat statistics on 11.08.2012 (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>)

From 1997 until the moment of Poland's accession to the European Union, i.e. until May 2004, an economic downturn was recorded, which consequently led to an increase in unemployment. Of course, not without significance were the effects of administration, education, health care and social security system reforms and the entry of baby boomers of the 80s. The unemployment rate rose and in 2002 it exceeded 20%. In 2004, Poland joined the EU as a country with the highest unemployment rate.

It should be noted that the unemployment rate can be counted in several ways. The unemployment rate given by public employment services is a ratio of the number of registered unemployed to the number of professionally active population. The second method of calculation, carried out by the Central Statistical Office is the methodology of the LFS (Labor Force Survey). It researches unemployed people aged 15-74 who, during the researched period, not only were without work but also actively sought it and were ready to take it. In both these methods, there is a clear difference in the definition of an unemployed person. Another way to determine this indicator is the so-called harmonized unemployment rate published by Eurostat. It is calculated on the basis of registered unemployment and LFS results, as a percentage of the unemployed in the professionally active population aged 15-74. It is considered to be the most current method and the given data are usually reported below the registered unemployment rate⁷⁴.

Regardless of the type of methodology, one can notice the presence of certain regularity in the indicators. Following the enlargement of the Community from 15 to 27, the unemployment rate increased in the EU countries and declined in Poland. The reason for this may be the opening of borders in many Member States. The results of J.Cz.Ossowski's study confirm that "as a result of Poland's accession to the European Union and the partial opening of the European labor market, the unemployment rate in Poland decreased" (Ossowski 2007).

According to the statistical analysis and forecasts, the unemployment rate in 2020 will stabilize below 7% (Eurostat 2011). Having regard to demographic changes in the population structure, a decrease in the birth rate and the number of working age population, it is expected that the labor supply reduction will be seen in the future, and thus the unemployment rate will decrease. People born during postwar baby boom leaving the labor market, the increase in professional activity of people born during the baby boom of the 1980s and children of that baby boom entering the labor market will have a significant impact on employment and unemployment. Does this mean that in a few years we will have a problem with jobs management?

Looking forward, despite the indicators not being very high, "today" and "tomorrow" are particularly difficult for two groups: young people under 30 years of age and those who are at least 50 years old. Until recently, the Poland followed a policy of shortening the length of employment (early retirement, pre-retirement benefits) in order to secure jobs for young people. Now - which seems to be justified - a policy of extending professional activity. A negative birth rate does not guarantee the replacement rate. At the same time, the so-called average life expectancy for men and women is growing. An aging population forces the increase in social security (pension, annuity, care). This is not only a Polish problem, but affects many countries. It should be noted that there has been a re-intensification of international migration, this time not only for employment, but permanent residence. According to Eurostat, in 2035, the Polish population will reduce by 2 million, i.e. to 36 million people⁷⁵. Hence, the

⁷⁴ Definition given by Central Statistical Office.

⁷⁵ Eurostat – 36,141; CSO – 35,993; UNO – 34,197.

problem of making people who are now approaching retirement remain in the labor market constitutes an increasingly important topic of discussion. The lack of stable, long-term, complementary labor market policies results in social discontent and is uncomfortable for both groups. Solutions developed in participatory system with the involvement of all participants should be introduced.

In her article, the author intends to deal with one of the above mentioned groups, and thus the phenomenon of ageism within the group of unemployed people over 50 years.

Situation of people aged 50+ in the labor market

The progressive aging of population is not solely a Polish problem. Demographic trends make it necessary to take an interest in the group of people who are above 50 years of age. The population forecast conducted by the Central Statistical Office indicates that the percentage of population aged 45-64 in the structure of the total population will increase in 2035 to 31.03% (in 2010 the ratio was 27.66%), while the population aged 15-44 will decrease to 33.20% (2010 - 43.78). The decline in birth rate will cause a decrease in the number of people of the pre-working and working age within the total population of the country, with an increase in the number of people of retirement age (ratio in 2011 - 17.5%, in 2035 - 26.7%)⁷⁶ This will have an effect of reducing the size of the working age population in the labor market. Thus, there is a need, among other things, for increasing the employment rate for older people.

The professional activity of Poles is low. In December 2011, approximately 16,000,000 of Polish citizens were employed. The employment rate, i.e. the ratio of the number of people actually involved in the work process to the general population aged over 15 years of age in the fourth quarter of 2011, according to the CSO was 56.3%⁷⁷. (Aktywność ekonomiczna ludności Polski, GUS 2013) It is significantly lower in the group of people aged 50 and over. Among the European Union countries (27), Poland is in one of the lowest places. The employment rate among people aged 15-64 is 64.3% (59.9% in Poland), aged 50-64 - 57.8% (48.6% in Poland), aged 55-64 - 47.4% (36.9% in Poland). The analysis of the data leads to a conclusion that the employment rate in the described age group in all EU countries, including Poland, has been growing for the last 10 years. The exceptions are Portugal and Romania. The rate reduction has been observed in Portugal since 2003. However, Romania achieved the highest rate in 1997. (Fig. 2)

By 2005, this ratio decreased, with minor upwards and downwards variations. The highest rates of employment are noted in: Iceland and Sweden (respectively, 79.2% and 72.3%). The lowest: Slovenia - 31.2%, Malta - 31.7%, Hungary - 35.8% and Poland - 36.9%. This means that, for example, Poland among the 27 EU countries has the lowest average age of leaving the labor market.

⁷⁶ Prognoza ludności na lata 2008 - 2035 (2009), www.stat.gov.pl, GUS, Warszawa.

⁷⁷ Aktywność ekonomiczna ludności Polski IV kwartał 2011,(2012), GUS, Warszawa.

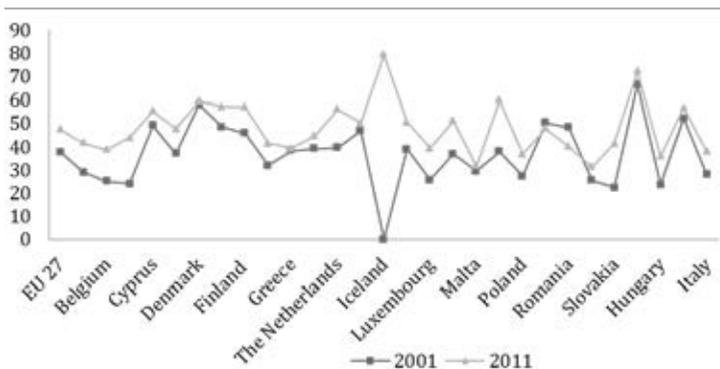


Fig.2 The employment rate of people aged 55-64 years in the 27 EU countries in 2001
 Source: Own calculations based on Eurostat data

The employment rate in the age group of 55-64 (Fig.3) is shown from the highest in the Podkarpackie province – 39.9% to the lowest in the Silesian province – 28%. The data are clearly differentiated by gender. The employment rate for men in Poland is by 21.1 percentage points higher than for women. The employment of women is the lowest in the Opolskie province – 18.2%, and the highest in the Podkarpackie province – 32.8%. (Fig. 3)

Demographic conditions and the prolonged duration of the global economic crisis negatively affect the labor market. The number of the unemployed is growing, and the time that the unemployed remain in the records of labor offices is growing. This phenomenon also applies to the group described.

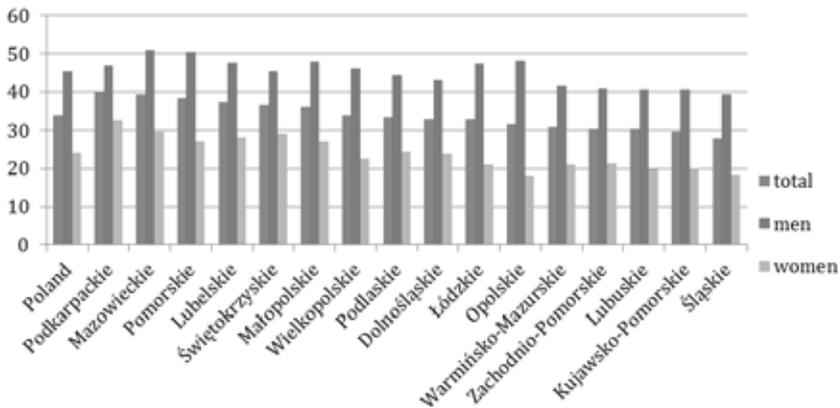


Fig.3 The employment rate of people aged 55-64 by province in 2010.%
 Source: Comparative regional analysis in the context of achieving objectives of the Human Capital Operational Programme 2007-2013. Ministry of Regional Development. Warsaw 2011

The rate of people aged 50+ in the total number of the unemployed in the country rose by 0.5 percentage points by 2010 and at the end of 2011 it was 22.3% (441,400people). Equally disturbing are the data showing that in the age group

of 50 and over almost half of the people remain in registers of the unemployed for over 12 months. Combined with education, the unemployed aged 50+ with secondary education, lower secondary education and below account for 44.1% and it may be presumed that they are not prepared to enter the labor market.

The lack of professional training, professional obsolescence due to exclusion from the labor market for a year and more, results in the lack of employers' interest in this group, and thus determines their vulnerability in both professional and living situation. It may be added that in the described group of the unemployed only 2.5% have higher education, 19.4% - post-secondary and secondary vocational education, 5.1% - secondary education, and 32.6% - vocational education. The largest group consists of those with lower secondary education and below, i.e. 39.1%⁷⁸.

Although the Act on Employment Promotion and Labor Market Institutions and programs co-financed by the ESF allow increasing or gaining new professional qualifications, because of the lack of combining the theory with a sufficient number of hours of practical training employers are wary about skills acquired by older unemployed people.

Years of professional experience constitute an important factor for employers. However, there are only 4.9% people without professional experience in the group of unemployed aged 50+ in Poland. In addition, within the group of 50-year-old unemployed, 22.9% have less than 10 years of work experience. Most of the population described has long-term work experience (over 10 years – 72.2%), however, their qualifications often do not meet the labor market needs⁷⁹. These people still have 17 or less years to retirement, so it needs to be kept in mind that this group should be included in specific employment programs that enable them to function in the labor market or be excluded from the unemployment register and provided with social benefits.

Ageism in the labor market

The labor market, difficult in terms of both supply and demand, carries special risk for people over 50. This includes Poland, other European Union countries, and the whole world. As shown above, demographic changes and the aging population extend the working age. To emphasize the importance of the problem, the Parliament and the Council of the European Union established the year 2012 as the European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity. This decision was in its justification to increase activity of older people in every area of life. Issues relating to the labor market involve growth of employability in the group of 50+ and maintenance of existing jobs.

Discrimination in the labor market can take place even with the existing legal safeguards. Polish law forbids unequal treatment on grounds of age. Prohibition of discrimination in the general sense is guaranteed by the Polish

⁷⁸ Data as on 31 December 2011. Statystyki rynku pracy, <http://www.analizy.mpips.gov.pl> MPiPS, Warszawa.

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

Constitution. However, conditions for equal treatment in employment and work were brought to the Polish law on 27.11.2000 with EU Directive No. 2000/78/EC, which modified the regulations of the Labor Code (Article 11³, Article. 18^{3a} LC). Despite the requirement for equal treatment of applicants for employment as well as employees, one can often meet with manifestations of ageism, i.e. unequal treatment on grounds of age⁸⁰. This term was introduced in 1969 by Robert Neil Butler (21.01.1927-04.07.2010), an American gerontologist and psychiatrist, to describe the phenomenon of discrimination against the elderly. He showed disappearance of ties between young and old people. According to Butler, prejudice and discrimination on grounds of age are a systematic process of negative creation and reproduction of behavior stereotypes towards the elderly, rooted in the youth through various messages. This phenomenon has been recognized in developed countries many years ago. With social development, some kind of society breakdown is observed. Could well-being affect the breakdown of family ties, loss of authority or values? The dictionary of sociology and social science defines ageism as "professing irrational views and prejudices towards individuals or groups, based on their age. One takes stereotypical assumptions about physical or mental characteristics of people of a particular age group and usually expresses them in a humiliating way. Frequently, ageism is directed against old people"(Marshall, 2004). "According to E.B. Palmore, ageism is any stereotype or discrimination against or in favor of any age group"(Urbanowicz, 2006: 4). According to P. Szukalski (2004:11–15) ageism is a manifestation of beliefs, prejudices and stereotypes with their base in biological diversity of people, associated with the aging process. Ageism in Poland is a new problem. Most victims of ageism are people about 50 years of age. In the situation of high unemployment and lack of jobs for young people, more than half of Poles are in favor of unequal treatment of job candidates. It is believed that employment priority should be given to young people⁸¹.

Ageism in the labor market can have many faces. Some of them are the result of the functioning of legal regulations, some are stereotypes lingering in the society. In the group of formal conditions, at least regulations of the Labor Code should be indicated. The four-year period of protection against dismissal for a worker who is of pre-retirement age can be seen as a sign of care and protection of their interests, on the other hand it marks the employee's activity time coming to an end. Employers are reluctant to establish or renew employment relationships with these people, because they would have to guarantee them employment until retirement (Article 39 LC). Such practices reduce the chance of finding a job for the unemployed. The European Court of Justice, in its judgment of 12 October 2010, ruled that the termination of employment due to retirement age is not discriminatory, unless the provisions, which allow it, have

⁸⁰ Ageism - discrimination on grounds of age. Most often, but not always, deals with problems on labor market (with its finding as well as maintaining it). It affects people over 45 years of age, perceived as too old in competition with young people for a job position. When discrimination refers to young people is called adulthood.

⁸¹ 51% of Polish indicated this in the nationwide study conducted by the project Equal Treatment – Standard of Good Governance, conducted on behalf of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment. CSO – 58% of Polish, Eurostat – 64% of EU respondents.

been introduced due to an important objective of the state employment and labor market policy. Such situations occur in certain occupational groups and in the case of liquidation of positions and redundancies. While national rules do not permit age to be the only criterion for termination, it is a common practice to speak of terminating the employment relationship with staff that have acquired pension rights in the first place. It is presumed that the majority of discriminatory behavior stems not only from prejudices but also from limited knowledge of demographic changes and its impact on the labor market. Workers at older age are less likely to be given employment opportunities and/or professional development as investing capital in young people is believed to be a better investment. The dignity of workers aged 50+ is often violated by highlighting their age as their weakness.

Irrational prejudices of some employers exacerbate stereotypical views on the utility of the elderly. In order to verify these opinions on many levels (scientific, practical, political) studies have been carried out. They show that the majority of employers agree on desired behavior of their employees. The advantages in the labor market are:

1. in professional life - education, acquired skills and lifelong learning, work experience, professional and spatial mobility, ability to use theoretical knowledge in practice,
2. in the field of personality traits - conscientiousness, loyalty to the employer, no bad habits, honesty, diligence, responsibility, self-reliance, ability to work in a team, ease of establishing contacts, good organization of their own work.

According to experts, personality traits occupy a prominent place as a criterion for the selection of an employee. They prove that older workers have developed so-called soft qualities and skills more strongly than young workers who are just entering the labor market. Their extensive professional and life experience predisposes them more to meet employers' expectations in this area (Raport z badań SGH 2012⁸²; Tokarz, 2007).

Ageism exists in the labor market in a more or less conscious form. The image of an old man, his behavior, opportunities, ways of life, relationships with others (including young people) is created by everyday life at micro-levels (such as the family, neighbors, friends, co-workers) and at the macro level (e.g. media creation, law, politics, labor market). This way not only a picture of an old man is built in the eyes of young people, but often a perception of themselves along with the age is shaped. There are two types of stereotyped views of older people: positive and negative. Both are associated with socio-professional activity, mental and physical fitness and good looks. Older people are more often perceived negatively. Especially in Polish culture, there are areas reserved only for the young or for the elderly (e.g. respectively, pub or church). "In our

⁸² Diagnoza obecnej sytuacji kobiet i mężczyzn 50+ na rynku pracy w Polsce (2012), Synteza wyników badań empirycznych zrealizowanych w ramach projektu systemowego pod nazwą „Wyrównywanie szans na rynku pracy dla osób 50+” <http://zielonalinia.gov.pl>, CRZL, UŁ, Warszawa-Łódź; Równe traktowanie standardem dobrego rządzenia,(2012), Raport z badań, Biuro pełnomocnika Rządu ds. Równego Traktowania, SGH, UJ, Warszawa.

tradition, the older person is the one for whom there are more improper than proper things to do”(Zięba-Kołodziej, 2010:66). Nevertheless, old age and views about it are strongly differentiated in Polish reality. It is perceived differently by people living in rural areas than by inhabitants of large cities. It is determined by many factors, such as age, sex, education, experience in dealing with older people and educational culture. In connection with the active aging of the society, the negative stereotype perception of people over 50 is not only unfair, but also socially harmful. The effects of this group of people being excluded from the labor market have negative economic consequences, which can be precisely calculated (e.g. higher benefits, lower taxes). Demographic forecasts indicate the lack of replacement of generations. In a few years, the demand for labor will exceed its supply. But the evaluative treatment of this group should be abandoned not just because of pure economics. The society is a closed circle. In every area of life a human being needs another human being. Studies on stereotypical perception of the elderly confirm that young people see old age as a period of preparation for death. They say that in the Polish culture it is a difficult time because of the cult of youth and lack of respect for age. “Their opinions manifest ambivalence and oscillation at the same time, with a tendency to negativity” (Zięba – Kołodziej, 2010:74). The need for change has to affect the mentality of the Polish society. These actions are a multi-faceted process in the sphere of education, educational gerontology, social policy, law and politics.

Activation of people aged 50+ in the labor market

In December 2011, the records of labor offices contained 441,400 unemployed people over the age of 50 (in 2010 – 421,700 people). It should be noted that the number of the young unemployed decreased per annum by 2.9% (in 2010 it increased by 0.6%) and the number of the elderly unemployed increased by 4.7% (in 2010 – 7.7%)⁸³. The difficult situation in the labor market for people aged 50+ forces the use of new solutions at the EU, national and local government level. Due to the variety of activities, the author deals only with selected groups of funds allocated for this purpose.

According to the Act on Employment Promotion and Labor Market Institutions, the tasks of the state in the promotion of employment, mitigation of the effects of unemployment, and professional activation are based on the National Action Plan for Employment (NAPE)⁸⁴. This document constitutes part of the National Reform Program for the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy and the Strategy for smart, sustainable growth conducive to social inclusion - Europe 2020 and reflects principles of the European Employment Strategy of the

⁸³ People over 50 years of age in labor market. Labor Market Department of Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Warsaw 2011, 2012.

⁸⁴ *Krajowy Plan Działania na rzecz Europejskiego Roku Aktywności Osób Starszych i Solidarności Międzypokoleniowej 2012 w Polsce*, <http://analizy.mpips.gov.pl>, MPiPS, Warszawa 2012.

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union⁸⁵. The Act requires regional governments to develop (with a strategy based on NAPE) Annual Action Plans for Employment, which contain preferred programs including groups that are most vulnerable in the labor market.

The implementation of tasks included in the Action Plans is financed mainly from the Labor Fund⁸⁶. In 2011, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy distributed Labor Fund resources in the amount of 1,919,996,100zloty between district labor offices in order to fund programs for promotion of employment, mitigation of unemployment effects. These programs are designed to increase the activity of the unemployed, including people aged 50+.

The Government Program "Solidarity of Generations" measures to increase labor force participation of people aged 50+ is a program that relates to problems of professional activation of the group in question. This program was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 17.10.2008. It involves people who are either unemployed, employed or professionally inactive. Increasing the activity of people over 50 is supposed to contribute to intergenerational solidarity in the labor market. Actions support priorities of the Human Capital Operational Program and create opportunities of co-financing them from the ESF⁸⁷. (Polska I Europejski Fundusz Społeczny, 2012) The total budget of the Program implemented in the years 2009-2015 is set at 23 billion zloty. The main objective of the Program is full exploitation of the potential of people aged 50 and over. Specific objectives in the field of labor market policy include:

1. improvement of working conditions, employment promotion of employees over 50 and age management,
2. improvement of skills and qualifications of employees over 50,
3. reduction of labor costs of employing older workers,
4. activation of older people who are unemployed or at risk of losing their jobs,
5. activation of the disabled.

In addition, the Program includes measures to reduce deactivation of employees in the system of social benefits by increasing and equalizing the retirement age for men and women. The aim of the Program is also to achieve the employment rate of people aged 55-64 at 40% in 2013 and 50% in 2020⁸⁸. As authors of the study claim, The Solidarity of Generations Program has so far been the first and only program that approaches the problem of professional activation of people aged 50+ in Poland in a systemic and comprehensive way (Urbaniak, Wiktorowicz, 2011).

⁸⁵ Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union is now called the Lisbon Treaty signed on 13.12.2007, which entered into force on 01.12.2009.

⁸⁶ The Labor Fund - State special fund, created on 01.01.1990, Instrument for mitigation of unemployment effects.

⁸⁷ Polska i Europejski Fundusz Społeczny, Komisja Europejska, 2012.

⁸⁸ employment rate set at 2020 in the Lisbon Strategy.

On 24.08.2012, with Resolution No. 137, The Council of Ministers adopted the Government's Program for Activity of the Elderly for 2012-2013⁸⁹. The Program will allow the use of the potential of older people who are ending their professional activity, by incorporating them in the action for social activity. For its implementation, the total amount of 60 million zloty was allocated, including 20 million zloty for 2012 and 40 million zloty for 2013. The Program will be financed from the state budget at the disposal of the minister responsible for social security. It will consist of two components:

1. system (long-term) – a long-term policy towards the elderly, inter-agency cooperation, expertise, with research centers, organizations and institutions working in area of support for seniors. By September 2013, the plan is to prepare objectives for a long-term policy of seniority,
2. competition (short-term) – in the area of social activity of older people. This component will be implemented through four priorities:
 - Priority I. Education of the elderly
 - Priority II. Social activity that promotes intra- and intergenerational integration
 - Priority III. Social participation of older people
 - Priority IV. Social services for the elderly (external services)

Entities that can directly benefit from the funds are non-governmental organizations and entities referred to in the Act of Public Benefit Activity and Volunteering of 24.04.2003 (Journal of Laws of 2010 position 1536 No. 234, as amended). Other entities (e.g. local government units, universities) may benefit from the program funds through a primarily public-legal partnership.

Another possible implementation of actions to increase the level of economic activity and employability of the unemployed and professionally inactive people including those aged 55-64, is the Human Capital Operational Program (HC OP) financed by the European Social Fund (ESF)⁹⁰.

⁸⁹ The Program is part of the National Development Strategy 2007-2015, Social Policy Strategy 2007-2013, the Civil Society Development Strategy 2009-2015 and the strategic documents developed at EU level, i.e. the perspective learning throughout life, Europe 2020, the EU Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning.

⁹⁰ HC OP is one of the programs for implementation of the NSRF 2007-2013. The activities are financed by the ESF, which is the EU's structural fund focused on the promotion of employment and economic and social cohesion of the Member States. In 2007-2013, states for approximately 75 billion euro, including Poland – 10 billion.

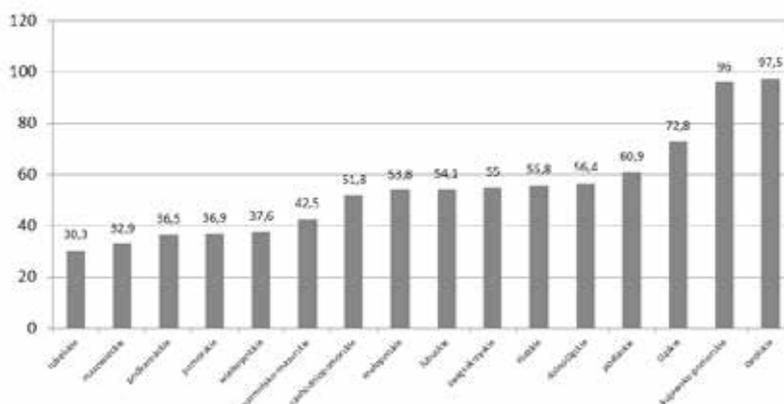


Fig.4 Rate of people aged 50-64 years who had completed projects in 2011.

Source: Progressive and annual reports, MPiPS, Warsaw 2011

It was adopted by the European Commission on 28.09.2007 and provides for an intervention period for 2007-2013. The financing of the activities is carried out in the following proportions: 85% of the European Union funds and 15% of the national share. The total amount is 11.5 billion euro, including 9.7 billion from ESF. Both strategic objectives of the Program, as well as actions set out in each of its Priorities, include the indicated group (in a different range, of course). The priority most focused on a group of people aged 50+ is Priority VI – The labor market open to all, in particular Priority Objective 4 – The increase of employment rate of older people. “Financial allocation for implementation of the HC OP Priority VI is close to 2.3 billion euro (including the share of the ESF at 1.9 billion), which is a 19.8% of allocation for the period 2007-2013 for the whole Program”⁹¹.

With regard to Objective 4, 77,000 people aged 50-64 completed the projects, which constitutes 49.7% of the objective. For participants of the HC OP Priority VI projects aged 50+, the employment efficiency stood at 42.9%.

The forms of activities for the elderly described above, and other that could not be shown due to publication restrictions, such as e.g. the EU programs supporting the competitive position of people over 50 in the labor market, are strongly supported. However, more attention should be paid to the management of age.

⁹¹ *Sprawozdania okresowe i roczne, MPiPS, Warszawa 2011.*

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The Construction of Organizational Well-Being: Emotional and Cognitive Issues

Well-being in the workplace through interaction between individual characteristics and organizational context

Introduction

The theme of well-being in the working environment can be observed from a particular point of view, stemming from which well-being itself is recognizable as the result of a particular interaction between the characteristics of the individual and those of the working context. In other words, contrary to the assumption according to which well-being in the workplace depends exclusively on external conditions in terms of the working and organizational environment within which the individual operates (Burke, 1993; Guest, 2002; Lawson, Noblet, Rodwell, 2009), the point of view referred to suggests that individual characteristics can play an active part in the development of well-being.

Exploring the views of the authors who have dealt with well-being as a result of the interaction between subjective factors and characteristics of the workplace, it is possible to recognize a common root in interactional theories, which considers a person-organization fit as being crucial in generating well-being (Alvesson, Willmott, 2002; Cable, Judge, 1996; Mininni, Manuti, Scardigno, Rubino, 2010), and three main aspects of study in which this general approach has declined: the study of job satisfaction, positive emotions and relational interaction.

Job Satisfaction

An initial approach which has permitted the analysis of the relationship between well-being in the workplace and subjectivity was the study of job satisfaction (Harris, Daniels, & Briner, 2003; Judge, Heller, Klinger, 2008; Ter Doest, Maes, Gebhardt, Koelewijn, 2006). According to Harter, Schmidt, and Keyes

(2003), two lines of research characterize this approach. The first is connected to the theory of the person-environment fit (French, Caplan, Van Harrison, 1982), in which well-being is connected to the presence of appropriate requests to the individual by the organization. A second line of research--the closest to our hypothesis--relates the performance and the quality of life of people with the presence of positive emotional states and satisfying relationships within the work environment (Isen, 1987; Warr, 1999). When their environment encourages people to seek out challenging or significant tasks, according to Csikszentmihályi (1997), optimal conditions exist for mutual well-being between individuals and the work environment. The assumption in this method of framing the problem is that well-being in the workplace is related to job satisfaction and this in turn is stimulated by the subjective ability to find a positive personal equilibrium within organizational interaction.

Brunstein, Schultheiss, and Grässmann (1998) emphasize the importance of the willingness to define suitable personal objectives (goals) with the scope of encouraging personal well-being. On the other hand, the subjective capacity to establish a satisfactory psychological contract with the organizational environment seems to be linked with well-being in the workplace (Guest, Conway, 2002); according to these authors, in fact, the psychological contract that people are able to subjectively maintain has become a formula widely used in research and has proven useful to explain many employees' behaviours, including attitudes towards health and well-being.

Positive Emotions

A second way of viewing the relationship between individual characteristics and well-being in work settings has as its cornerstone the hypothesis that positive emotions generate well-being (De Neve, Copper, 1998; Fineman, 2006; Hochwarter, Thompson, 2010; Linley, Harrington, Garcea, 2010). Assuming that interaction between a person's subjective aspects and the organization can have positive outcomes (O'Brien-Wood, 2001), we can make reference to ample documentation that examines the issue of self-confidence as a resource both for the well-being of the individual and the organization (Pierce, Gardner, 2004; Zapf, 2002).

Di Nuovo and Zanchi (2008) confirm that employee participation in the Company's mission, positive emotions, emotional climate, and the sense of belonging to the organization are interdependent. Other authors (Feldt, Mäkikangas, Aunola, 2006; Kalimo, Pahkin, Mutanen, 2002; Pulkkinen, Feldt, Kokko, 2006), referring to the theory of control of the emotions (Gross, 1998, 2006), highlight how emotional control based on a sense of coherence, optimism and self-esteem plays a developmental role with respect to a series of social interactions, including work. Their longitudinal studies on emotive control have found that positive emotions in adolescence have a beneficial effect on scholastic and subsequent workplace integration. Custers and Aarts (2005) argue that positive affection plays a key role as a motivator in the unconscious disposition towards

the pursuance of objectives, thereby contributing to a better relationship with the working environment, as reported on the relationship between job satisfaction and well-being by Wright, Cropanzano, and Bonett (2007).

An additional contribution to the hypothesis of positive emotions as generators of well-being in the workplace comes from the cultural analysis of Alvesson and Willmott (2002): their study underlines how a sense of internal coherence and a positive self-regard are factors which facilitate a positive process of organizational control, resulting in an improvement in the climate of the working environment. Another perspective on positive emotions is also underlined by the American school of counselling. Beginning with the social learning theory (Bandura, 1986), counselling has developed a vision of social and cognitive satisfaction within scholastic contexts and later in the employment context. These authors provide a theoretical perspective that shows the integration between cognitive, social, and personality variables, the latter related to the tendency to express positive emotions, as being effective in promoting well-being within specific areas of life such as work and school (Hung-Bin Sheu, Lent, 2009; Lent, Brown, 2006; Lent, 2004, 2008). Furthermore, Lent and Fouad (2011) also support a correlation between positive emotions which are present in the self and an appropriate cognitive and social development of the individual.

Relational Interaction

A third approach that theorizes the possibility of an individual to generate well-being in the workplace is connected with the study of interpersonal skills (Bambacas, Patrickson, 2008; Fligstein, 1997; Purkiss, Rossi, Glendon, Thompson, Myers, 2008) and especially with the attitude towards extroversion and active relational interaction. Kamdar and Van Dyne (2007) have observed that social exchange supported by sociability produces effects of organizational citizenship, improving employees' performance of tasks. Ryan and Deci (2000) have verified that the innate psychological needs for competence, autonomy and openness in relationships, if met, will provide greater self-motivation, and if obstructed, can lead to a decrease in motivation and well-being. Butler and Waldroop (2004) identified four relational dimensions within the work (influence; interpersonal facilitation; relational creativity; leadership and team) highly correlated in creating satisfaction, performance and organizational ability at work.

Hughes (2005) reported a study that showed that extroverts experienced less fatigue and stress at work. Some authors emphasize the relationship between the Big Five traits (including extroversion, agreeableness, openness) and psychological well-being (Grant, Langan-Fox, Anglim, 2009; Haslam, Whelan, Bastian, 2009). As noted previously, individual psychological well-being may contribute to the welfare of the organization by improving job performance and group atmosphere. Kumar, Bakhshi, and Rani (2009) explore--using the Big Five--the link between personality and organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs), finding that extroversion and agreeableness in interpersonal relationships support OCBs.

George and Jones (1997) sustain that extra role behaviour, such as spontaneity in interpersonal relationships, helps to create an isomorphic relationship of spontaneity and well-being, including at the organizational level. According to Ferris, Perrewé, Anthony, and Gilmore (2000) and Perrewé, Ferris, Funk, and Anthony (2000) extroversion, openness, respect, confidence, trust and sincerity are political skills that will improve relations within the team by reducing stress in the workplace, and are predictive of ability for success in a wide range of jobs in highly dynamic organizational environments that require flexibility.

Openness to emotional expression and the capacity to create a playful group identity, are connected to well-being in temporary groups (Terrion, Ashforth, 2002), while the ability to have open relationships and express one's personal characteristics is seen as a factor in subjective well-being and at the same time as a factor able to increase the productivity of those who work in social service organizations (Graham, Shier, 2010, 2011).

Objectives

This research has proposed three different objectives: (a) explore the meaning attributed to the concept of well-being in the workplace by a group of employees, (b) identify which factors of any kind are perceived as capable of influencing well-being in the workplace, and (c) verify whether individual characteristics are perceived as capable of influencing well-being in the workplace and which appear to have greater power to do so.

Method

Tools

The research, given its descriptive purposes, was carried out from a qualitative perspective and was based both on the use of focus groups (Krueger, Casey, 2000) and semistructured individual interviews (Gabriel, 2000; Murray, 2002).

Focus groups, lasting three hours each, were conducted by a pair formed of an interviewer and an observer, using a set of three open-ended questions that explored the perception of the group in relation to three aspects: (a) the meaning of well-being in the workplace ("What does 'well-being in the workplace' mean to you? How could you describe it?"), (b) the factors that affect well-being in the workplace ("What are the any-kind factors that you believe can influence the creation of well-being in the workplace?"), and (c) the presence of (other) individual characteristics, besides those mentioned above, which can affect well-being in the workplace ("Do you particularly believe individual characteristics exist that may influence the creation of well-being in the workplace? If you agree, which are they?").

As can be seen, the second question left the subjects free to indicate, among the factors that influence well-being in the workplace, both organizational and individual characteristics, while the third question led subjects to specifically consider the characteristics of the individual type. In the event that this had already been mentioned in the answers to the second question, the participants were asked to be more specific and possibly mention others. If on the other hand such characteristics had not been mentioned, they were asked if they were deemed capable of influencing well-being, and--if affirmative--to specify and describe.

In total, seven focus groups were carried out, which took place in a meeting room, protected from external interference, within two organizations.

Individual interviews, lasting an hour and half, were conducted by a pair composed of an interviewer and an observer, using the same questions for all focus groups. In addition, during the interviews, the interviewer asked the subjects to provide examples of stories related to events of particular relevance to their well-being, in order to clarify their statements. In total, nine individual interviews were carried out, which took place within a third organization in a quiet meeting room far from company operations.

The focus groups and interviews were recorded and transcribed in full, except for information that could lead to the recognition of the participants. Subjects gave their informed consent to participation in the research, and were assured anonymity in the data which emerged. In addition, focus groups and interviews were made with the consent of the Human Resources Directors of the three organizations in which research was conducted and also of the respondents' managers.

Subjects

63 participants took part in the focus group: 36 employees of the National Health Service (four focus groups) and 27 employees of a private company (three focus groups). Nine individual interviews were carried out with nine employees of a multinational. The companies were chosen randomly within a set of organizations, located in central Italy, which had expressed their interest, so as to favour the plurality of working contexts investigated. Managerial roles were excluded and the subjects were composed of professional employees (e.g. doctors, nurses, and human resources employees) and team leaders (e.g. coordinators, personnel administrators, and corporate project leaders). The sociodemographic characteristics of the 72 subjects who took part in the research are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Subjects

| Characteristic | n | % |
|-----------------------|----|-------|
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| Up to 34 | 12 | 16.7% |
| 35-39 | 17 | 23.6% |
| 40-44 | 19 | 26.4% |
| 45-49 | 16 | 22.2% |
| 50 and above | 8 | 11.1% |
| <i>Gender</i> | | |
| Female | 37 | 51.4% |
| Male | 35 | 48.6% |
| <i>Role</i> | | |
| Team leader | 24 | 33.3% |
| Professional employee | 48 | 66.7% |

Data Analysis

The content analysis of material collected through focus groups and interviews was conducted using a paper and pencil technique. This analysis took place in three distinct phases: (a) in the first phase the perceptions of the meaning of well-being in the workplace were searched out; (b) in the second phase the general perceptions of factors influencing well-being were searched out; (c) in the third phase the perceptions of individual characteristics influencing well-being were searched out.

Initially a database of statements relating to each of the three aspects was created. Each statement was encoded by identifying the central element in the classification (e.g. "reduction of hierarchical barriers"). The encoding was made independently by each of the three researchers who participated in the study. In this way, each researcher had read all of the material gathered through research. The encodings of the three researchers were compared in order to reach a final result. In the event of disagreement the case in question was discussed, in order to achieve a convergence of views.

Various elements emerged (14) for the perception of the meaning of well-being in the workplace, nine for the perception of factors influencing well-being in the working context and 14 for the perception of individual characteristics that influence well-being in work contexts), which were subsequently moved to the more general categories to which they belonged (e.g. "participatory hierarchy"). This step was carried out independently by each of the three researchers, who then compared their categorizations to reach a final agreed choice. Two weeks after the conclusion of the data analysis, transcriptions from two focus groups and an interview were once more encoded, again independently by the three researchers, with a categorical confirmation of stability.

Finally, the analysis of illustrative stories told by the subjects during the interviews made it possible to make some considerations about the dynamics of the concept of well-being in the workplace.

Results

The focus groups and interviews collected 628 statements, which were divided into three areas: (a) the significance of well-being in the workplace (248 statements), (b) every kind of factors that affect well-being in the workplace (158 statements), and (c) individual characteristics that affect well-being in the workplace (222 statements).

As shown in Tables 2, 3 and 4, the perceptions expressed through a set of categories have been listed in each area. For each category, moreover, it was possible to further differentiate specific elements that provide a more detailed description of the perceptions of individuals.

Table 2: The Meaning of Well-Being in the Workplace

| Category | n | Specific elements (n) |
|--|----|--|
| Acceptance of the rules | 76 | Transparency in communication between colleagues (26) |
| | | Staying within the boundaries (20) |
| | | Clarity in the definition of rights and duties by the company (16) |
| | | Avoidance of disputes in business relationships (14) |
| Participatory hierarchy | 67 | Sharing the company vision (22) |
| | | Participatory leadership (18) |
| | | Reduction of hierarchical barriers (15) |
| | | Leading by example (12) |
| Positive relations and working climate | 58 | Knowing how to listen (23) |
| | | Being able to rely on the group (19) |
| | | Mental flexibility(16) |
| Appreciation of the value of work | 47 | Being motivated by work content (20) |
| | | Economic reward (16) |
| | | Job rotation and change in routine role (11) |

Table 3: Factors Which Influence Organizational Well-Being

| Category | n | Specific elements (n) |
|----------------------------|----|---|
| Values | 59 | Respect (24) |
| | | Humility (19) |
| | | Transparency and exchange of information (16) |
| Organizational functioning | 54 | Fluid organization (22) |
| | | Clarity and strategy sharing (18) |
| | | Synergy between the levels (14) |
| Physical environment | 45 | Comfort (15) |
| | | Equipment (13) |
| | | Common areas (7) |

Table 4: Individual Characteristics Which Influence Organizational Well-Being

| Category | n | Specific elements (n) |
|--|----|---|
| Being positive | 76 | Being proactive (24) |
| | | Confidence in one's own abilities (17) |
| | | Openness towards the new (14) |
| | | Valuing differences (12) |
| | | Self-motivation and energy (9) |
| Communication | 69 | Openness (23) |
| | | Leadership (19) |
| | | Collaborative relationships (16) |
| | | Knowing how to defuse situations (11) |
| Management of difficulties and conflicts | 48 | Showing tenacity and refusing to give up (18) |
| | | Striking a balance in tense situations (16) |
| | | Tolerating uncertainty (14) |
| Socioemotional skills | 29 | Creativity (16) |
| | | Empathic communication (13) |

The Meaning of Well-Being in the Workplace

The analysis of the responses from 72 subjects identified 248 statements referring to the first issue, that flow into four main categories articulated in 14 more specific elements (see Table 2).

Acceptance of the rules. The first category that stands out is the *acceptance of the rules* (76 statements). In general, it is stated that a clear definition and acceptance of the rules constitutes a fundamental basis of well-being in the workplace. In specific terms, there are four elements.

Transparency in communication between colleagues (26 statements). This affirms that when employees openly exchange information in their possession they

can work under better conditions both in personal and organizational terms (“Well-being is clear and undistorted communication... sometimes you clash with reality in which the other person instead of streamlining the procedures tends to make them more complicated”).

Staying within the boundaries (20 statements). Well-being in the workplace depends on clarity and respect for role boundaries in order to avoid duplications and frictions. In other words, the ability to reduce overlaps and conflicts promotes mutual acceptance and well-being (“Well-being is to be clear about one’s role in the organization”).

Clarity in the definition of rights and duties by the company (16 statements). Ideally an organization should put in place a system that allows easy recognition of the rights and the duties of each person regardless of their role; it is believed that this could be a source of guidance and both ethical and operational support, steering relationships within the workforce towards a *comfort zone* (“The organization is one entity and should not leave room for ambiguity, there is a certain protocol to be followed. They say that what matters is the result, but things should be done according to certain criteria. There must be strict compliance with protocol, clarity of what you should and you can do, all this leads to worker well-being”).

Avoidance of disputes in business relationships (14 statements). It has to be achieved intentionally for the greater good of the company: getting along together, recognizing the unifying aspects rather than those which divide, appreciating differences, are examples of forms of relationships pursued in the name of a common good (“Well-being is remaining calm without clashing with others” or “It is important to find a way to spend the day trying to interact positively with everyone”).

Participatory hierarchy. The second category of meaning is represented by *participatory hierarchy* (67 statements), divided into four specific elements.

Sharing the company vision (22 statements). It includes a series of statements that highlight the importance of a hierarchy capable of listening and sharing the organizational vision as well its standards (“Well-being is internal communication at all levels from top to bottom in order to understand the objectives, which is fundamental to working well”).

Participatory leadership (18 statements). It comprises a series of statements concerning the organization’s ability to foster participatory styles of influence aimed at actively involving employees (“Well-being is the possibility to work with a leader that knows how to inspire people”).

Reduction of hierarchical barriers (15 statements). It’s the organization’s ability to be direct, open and transparent in the exchange of information. There is also a critical reference to a personalized or paternalistic approach, which contrasts with an expectation of the common definition of goals (“The door should always be open” or “The problem is the presence of two players with equal dignity: we must lower the barriers and well-being comes out”).

Leading by example (12 statements). It calls for consistent behaviour, which reinforces the provision for clarity and consistency with common codes in

opposition to individualism (“It is not fair to have to put up with arrogant people who act as if they owned the company, each in his own way must lead by example”).

Positive relations and working climate. The third category of meaning that emerges consists of *positive relations and working climate* (58 statements). This category contains three specific elements.

Knowing how to listen (23 statements). This element refers to a general ability in mutual listening skills and attention to others as a practice that creates positive working conditions (“Well-being is that everyone listen to everyone else”).

Being able to rely on the group (19 statements). Constructive relationships can prevail and a positive climate can be created within the working groups (“To experience well-being everyone needs to work in a collaborative group to achieve their goals”).

Mental flexibility (16 statements). It describes an arrangement which simplifies problems, by reducing barriers and streamlining interaction which may otherwise be too formal (“Well-being depends on people’s mental elasticity. If one is elastic, well-being is improved; if one is rigid, well-being is adversely affected”).

Appreciation of the value of work. The fourth and last category of meaning consists of the *appreciation of the value of work* (47 statements). This category contains three specific elements.

Being motivated by work content (20 statements). A part of well-being depends on satisfaction with what employers do (“Well-being is a state of personal growth that occurs when you enjoy what you do”).

Economic reward (16 statements). A fair economic reward for the skills and commitment provided fosters the perception of well-being (“If everyone is paid in proportion to what they give you create well-being” or “A just economic reward means feeling valued and recognized”).

Job rotation and change in routine role (11 statements). It refers to the ability to vary the experience to avoid the monotony of work (“If you are not lucky enough to have a challenging career the only way to protect well-being is by job rotation”).

Factors that Affect Well-Being in the Workplace

The analysis of the responses from 72 subjects identified 158 statements referring to the second issue, that flow into three main categories articulated into nine more specific elements (see Table 3).

Values. The first category was defined as *values* (59 statements), which contains three specific elements.

Respect (24 statements). It is the acceptance of mutual responsibilities, both professional and personal, as well as acceptance of the value of the organization itself (“Well-being exists where people, organization, principles and values are respected as a basis for work”).

Humility (19 statements). It refers to the definition of a nonjudgmental stance towards others and a willingness to communicate regardless of the positions of

power, from top to bottom and vice versa ("People are often very proud, they are often lacking in humility... the least competent tend to argue and create problems").

Transparency and exchange of information (16 statements). It is the importance of sharing information in the general interest: if everyone used this method the quality of corporate life would be improved ("An effort must be made to be objective and tolerant in order to understand others, including customers" or "Information should be shared, for example, in meetings how many bosses have basic information").

Organizational functioning. The second category of meaning that emerges is *organizational functioning* (54 statements), which includes three specific elements.

Fluid organization (22 statements). It is required in order to define a quality of organizational processes that are linear, without procedural dysfunctions and rigid personal interpretations ("A shared common goal without too much punctiliousness has a positive effect on the smooth running of the organization").

Clarity and strategy sharing (18 statements). It refers to the organization's ability to place the demands made on individuals within a clear overview and perspective ("There are two levels, managerial and professional: there must be aims and rules which have been agreed at the two levels").

Synergy between the organizative levels (14 statements). It is the organization's general ability to facilitate action over roles. This synergy should result from the motivation of the individual and the organization's desire for achievement ("If I for one understand the dynamics by which the other acts, friction is avoided").

Physical environment. The third category of meaning that emerges is defined as the *physical environment* (45 statements), divided into three specific elements.

Comfort (15 statements). It is a set of factors (light, heat, space, etc.) that improve the physical quality of permanence in the workplace ("Well-being is also the environment, air, light" or "To have changed location has changed our lives, now we have heat, light, the bathroom").

Equipment (13 statements). It refers to the working instruments which promote both well-being and work activity ("Sometimes details such as the efficiency of computers, the seating position, are important for good health").

Common areas (seven statements). A set of conditions that promote physical well-being through the facilitation of social interaction ("The coffee break with conversation between colleagues is a very important moment" or "The fact that we eat together is positive").

Individual Characteristics that Affect Well-Being in the Workplace

The analysis of the responses from 72 subjects, all in agreement that individual characteristics may influence well-being in the workplace, identified 222 statements referring to the third issue, that flow into four main categories articulated in 14 more specific elements (see Table 4).

Being positive. The first category was defined as *being positive* (76 statements). Positivity is an individual attitude that expresses a force arising from self-esteem, confidence and consistency, features that allow a person to contribute to the opening of new horizons, optimism and organizational reliability. In reference to this category five specific elements emerge.

Being proactive (24 statements). It refers to a proactive approach towards others and the organization, an active and confident disposition in proposing actions and solutions (“An individual’s proactive response tips the balance...provides a positive stimulus”).

Confidence in one’s own abilities (17 statements). Self-esteem sustained by acquired abilities and by individual competency is described as an attribute that promotes well-being in the workplace (“Feeling able to do the job makes not only me feel good but also others, which leads to respect, meritocracy, rewards from the organization”).

Openness towards the new (14 statements). It is a willingness to use knowledge to further new experiences. This element also expressed the employees’ confidence in their ability to improve organizational functioning (“It is always the individual that improves the organization, because otherwise you would become exhausted... There must always be room for novelty”).

Valuing differences (12 statements). The appreciation of people with different opinions, or who communicate within different roles is seen as an important aspect of being positive, a variant of the *openness towards the new* which has declined in the context of interpersonal relationships (“Differences are of value within the organization, the inherent rudeness in not respecting the opinions of others is a form of insecurity”).

Self-motivation and energy (9 statements). The ability to find one’s own stimulus to fuel motivation is seen as a vital factor that reflects positively on well-being (“If a person is radiant and positive, love and passion reflect on well-being” or “An individual characteristic that favours well-being is self-motivation in the sense of caring for the things you do”).

Communication. The second category is *communication* (69 statements). The word *communication* is used numerous times and across all dimensions: *good communicator* is a multiattribute which excites many expectations. In an attempt to focus on a more specific dimension related to the organizational context, four specific elements emerge.

Openness (23 statements). It is a dynamic characteristic of sociability and helpfulness in work relationships (“Well-being arises from communication, being able to communicate, sitting around a table with colleagues is important because the discussions often lead to a solution”).

Leadership (19 statements). Subjects use this word to describe the ability to influence and lead the group in a positive manner, and also to define authoritative behaviour (“If each in his own small way exercised leadership, it would benefit everyone” or “Being open but self-confident, not backing down in front of obstacles means not immobilizing the organization”).

Collaborative relationships (16 statements). It refers to the disposition towards listening to and understanding others in the search for common solutions (“It’s

important to find a way to spend the hours of the day trying to interact well, the way we relate to others affects everyone...We should be ready to help, be polite”).

Knowing how to defuse situations (11 statements). It is the tendency, even jokingly and/or self-deprecatingly, to diminish problems without denying their existence (“An important attribute is an individual’s capacity for fearless self-criticism” or “A joke reduces conflict and barriers! I would also like to think with joy of work”).

Management of difficulties and conflicts. The third category of meaning that emerges refers to the *management of difficulties and conflicts* (48 statements). Stamina and the ability to manage on the occasions when requirements appear to exceed resources, creating the inevitable tensions, are described as attributes that help an individual go through organizational life generating positivity and protecting basic well-being. Three specific elements emerge.

Showing tenacity and refusing to give up (18 statements). To be determined and not to become discouraged are described as individual characteristics that ensure the rewards of well-being (“There are times when if you give up your objectives, you will collapse, it is better to be reactive”).

Striking a balance in tense situations (16 statements). The ability to mediate is described as being positive both for the employees and the company, it means being an active participant without being drawn into conflicts or tensions (“We must be able to clear-up group tensions and misunderstandings. We must never lose hope in the power of communication”).

Tolerating uncertainty (14 statements). This element is described as the ability to maintain a positive response to the working environment even in conditions of relative discomfort and accept uncertainty whilst awaiting new opportunities (“Well-being means being able to stay calm, not being under pressure and offering the same thing to others”).

Socioemotional skills. The fourth category of meaning that emerges is that of *socioemotional skills* (29 statements). This is an area that refers to features perceived as specials: these features have in common a facilitating role of individual and group functions. Within this category two specific elements can be found.

Creativity (16 statements). It refers to the use of imagination in dealing with problems and the ability to see problems from new angles (“An individual that has creativity can assist the organization, can open doors and consequently facilitate the disclosing of the other as persons”).

Empathic communication (13 statements). It is described as the subjects’ ability to express a closeness that catches the sense and rearranges emotionally the dynamic field of the individual-group-organization interaction (“We need to identify with the person in front of us to understand their needs. Well-being is a closeness between me and the other person”).

Additional Considerations that Emerged from Individual Interviews

The nine individual interviews, as well as providing material for the three research questions discussed so far, allowed for the introduction of additional analysis that called into question the dynamics of the concept of well-being. In

particular, the analysis of the sample episodes narrated by the subjects allowed us to focus on two aspects.

The first aspect is referred to the conviction that well-being in the workplace is a *phenomenon in which two directions of organizational operation are dynamically integrated*. The first direction--using a participant's words--is the "Organization as a structure that exists regardless of each individual", that is a top-down direction formed by structures, decisions and a work ethic built-up over time. The second direction is formed by the organizational actions of individuals and groups, or a bottom-up direction that could--if embraced by many individuals--become long-term well-being ("If it's true that organization is something that you receive from others, it is also true that it is something you can offer to others: this promotes general well-being" or "You construct well-being yourself, but if you have worked successfully, those who come after you will recognize it").

The second aspect is referred to the conviction that niches of prosperity can be created individually through people who make up the working groups (e.g. a subject said he was rather bewildered when he first arrived at the company and had only begun to "Breathe an air of good management" when he actually met, in the section in which he worked, people with whom he could collaborate constructively).

Furthermore, it is evident that if some people tend to represent well-being in a dichotomous manner, separating an ideal from a real dimension, so that judgment may tend to focus on one of these two polarities forgetting the other, some others are able to overcome this simplification asserting that the well-being is dynamically placed between the level of *what should be* and the level of *what is* ("One cannot truly understand well-being without an overview because it always works on two levels, that of desires and that of possibilities").

Discussion

The results obtained from the study are consistent with the indications in literature about both the interaction between individual and organization in the construction of well-being in the workplace and indication of some individual characteristics as cooperating in the formation of well-being (Graham, Shier, 2011; Hodkinson et al., 2004). Data are also consistent with the recognized importance of social constructivism in research concerning the individual in the corporate context (Loftus, Higgs, 2010) and also confirm Allcorn's hypothesis (1995) concerning the use of subjective points of view for understanding well-being in the workplace and the projected change of organizational culture in a direction favourable to the creation of well-being.

More specifically, the research was divided into three parts. The answers to the first research question (the meaning of well-being in the workplace) showed a perception of well-being characterized as interaction between people and organizations, in accordance with the claims made by some authors (Alvesson, Willmott, 2002; Mininni et al., 2010).

The first category highlighted--*acceptance of the rules*--clearly expresses a perception that corporate rules are described as a source of well-being if there is an interplay of transparency and organizational behaviour. The second category--*participatory hierarchy*--emphasizes that the lack of barriers, sharing and involvement in hierarchical relationships is seen as an element of well-being. The third category--*positive relations and working climate*--returns once again to the perception of well-being as a positive quality of interpersonal relationships, regardless of the rules and position held. The fourth category--*appreciation of the value of work*--shows that structural factors are linked to employee satisfaction towards the content of their job, towards their salaries, and towards social and cognitive stimulation. In this category, we find a relation between job satisfaction and well-being as described by many authors (Harris et al., 2003; Ter Doest et al., 2006). Overall, we can see that well-being is perceived not only as an interaction between individuals and the organization, but is strongly related to the quality of the relationship between individuals. This is in agreement with what is said by Settoon and Mossholder (2002), who described how the quality of relationships in the working environment is predictive of results-oriented OCBs and respect for the individual, and by D'Amato and Zijlstra (2008), in a study conducted in Europe on the staff of 406 hospitals, which revealed how individual characteristics linked to the working environment and to self-efficacy were a prerequisite for satisfactory results and a consequent increase in well-being.

The second research question (factors that influence well-being in the workplace) was deliberately placed in general terms, so as to allow participants the freedom to decline the definition of the factors influencing well-being in objective or subjective, individual, organizational or structural terms.

The first category that emerged--*values*--can be seen as a set of ethical and communicational features that the individual and the group would have to be encouraged to express in order to benefit overall well-being. This seems to confirm existing positions on the importance of individual values on job satisfaction and on the working environment (Bulger, Matthews, Hoffman, 2007; Burke, 2000; Diskienė, Goštautas, 2010). The second and the third categories--*organizational functioning* and *physical environment*--refer to more objective elements of the organization, although some specific elements (*clarity and common strategies* and *common spaces*) refer instead to aspects of communication.

The third research question (individual characteristics that affect well-being in the workplace) has confirmed several previous studies concerning individual factors considered to be favourable to well-being.

In particular, in the category *being positive*, the perception that an active and trusting attitude in proposing solutions and positive action is a feature which affects well-being is in line with the results of studies that describe the link between positive emotions, the ability to achieve satisfaction at work and the ability to be open to organizational change (De Neve, Copper, 1998; Fineman, 2006; Lent, 2004; Linley et al., 2010). The specific elements that arose regarding confidence in the respondents' own resources and self-motivation are consistent with the literature that examines the issue of self-esteem as a resource for

well-being of both the individual and the organization (Feldt et al., 2006; Kalimo et al., 2002; O'Brien-Wood, 2001; Pierce, Gardner, 2004; Pulkkinen et al., 2006).

Similarly, in the second category *communication*, the perception of respondents agrees with recent literature concerning interaction as an area linked to relational well-being. The perception that openness in relationships and collaborative relationships are factors influencing well-being in the workplace is in line with that stated by Butler and Waldroop (2004), Kamdar and Van Dyne (2007) and Kumar et al. (2009) about extroversion and pleasantness in interpersonal relationships as factors supporting OCBs. In turn, the perception that leadership is influential with regard to well-being agrees with research conducted by Purkiss et al. (2008). Finally, the ability to defuse a situation is consistent with that described by George and Jones (1997) concerning the positive effect of certain extra-role behaviours in the workplace.

In the third category *management of difficulties and conflicts*, resilience or the ability to cope with conflicting tensions or difficulties of different kinds is described as a characteristic that aids a person during their working life, generating positivity or at least protecting their basic well-being. This perception agrees with the importance of political skills in adapting positively to the workplace (Ferris, Perrewe, Anthony, Gilmore, 2000; Perrewé et al., 2000). The quality of perseverance, as well as the ability to remain well-balanced in a dispute are considered both within the context of political skills and as a personality traits favoring OCBs (Borman, Penner, 2001). In addition, all three elements which emerged in this category confirmed the most recent views on resilience as a promoter of well-being in the workplace (Cooper, 2010; Ferguson 2009; Magrin, 2008).

The fourth category of *socioemotional skills* is instead connected with characteristics perceived as specials. This peculiarity seems to stem from a facilitating function performed by these capacities in respect of the working environment, as is referred to, for example, in a definition ("Knowing how to 'wash away' the problems within the organization") contained in a statement relative to this item of empathic communication. This category appear to find confirmation in literature only in an indirect sense, such as occurs with the empathy necessary to improve the relationship with a patient (and consequently between the members of staff) in health care services (Hojat 2009).

Finally, the considerations which emerged concerning the *niches of well-being* in the individual interviews are consistent with the observations of Van De Vliert when he says that "at the lowest levels, each employee adapts his or her own well-being to a mosaic of working conditions, group characteristics, and organizational circumstances, which is perhaps hardly shaped climate and wealth" (2008:524).

Conclusions

The research results provide feedback as to how each variable is perceived by the individual as a useful resource for improving well-being in the workplace. These findings could define people as *activators* of well-being and can be

placed in supplementary terms compared to the vision of people considered as *receptors* of well-being from the external environment. In that sense, well-being in the workplace could be promoted not only *from above* through objective action by management (e.g. the promotion of organizational welfare policies), but also *from below*, through the transformation of individual traits and behaviours that are manifested in people's activities (Graham, Shier, 2010; Hodkinson et al., 2004; Loftus, Higgs, 2010).

At an applied level, the data obtained through the research confirms the possibility of active involvement by people in the construction of well-being, within this organizational vision that is capable of integrating bottom-up and top-down processes. More precisely, it is possible to identify three areas of intervention.

The first area is represented by the continuous training about well-being in the workplace as a result of constructive collaboration between the individual, group, and organization. This issue could also enhance a series of bottom-up initiatives focused on organizational climate, avoiding in this respect initiatives in which the individual is perceived as a mere passive recipient, but rather by exploiting the approach of action research.

A second area may consist of organizational development initiatives aimed at small groups, leaders and other strategic players in the construction of the subsystems of well-being in the workplace. Furthermore, organizational counselling initiatives can be contemplated, aimed at reducing stress and improving proactive adaptation to the workplace.

Finally, a third area of action consists of research aimed at investigating perceptions of well-being among the different roles in order to provide useful monitoring to the human resources management team and instigate organizational change. In this case also a qualitative approach, capable of encouraging participation through projects of investigation that use interviews and focus groups, can be regarded as more consistent with the results of the study presented here.

It should be remembered that the research was limited by the subjects involved and by the sole use of the paper and pencil technique of data analysis. In this sense, future studies could be undertaken in other organizational contexts with the object of enriching the data base available to scholars and facilitate the identification of further individual characteristics which contribute to well-being in the workplace. Furthermore, a more ample data base could facilitate the use of software for the analysis of the content (e.g. ALCESTE) and enabling the comparisons between the perceptions of groups composed of subjects where distinction is made according to their organization of belonging, their role and other sociodemographic characteristics.

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The Faces of Old Age – between Marginalisation and Social Inclusion

*When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground
/African proverb/*

Introduction

Dynamically developing Western European societies usually perceive the elderly as useless for the system and helpless in the face of changes. Among the many possible representations of old age, the predominant one generally depicts an old person as ailing, sick, dependant on others, finding it difficult to adapt, depressive and self-centered. A stereotypical perception of the so-called third age, third shift, retired, late adulthood, post-productive age directs the attention towards one-dimensional and rather negative connotations of such image. The problems of ageing, death and suffering is ignored in the public debate and media discussions, yet only occasionally (i.e. on the occasion of the World Day of the Sick, suffering from specific diseases) the attention to the issue is paid with continued avoidance of an excess of unpleasant visual content. Old age, while finding representation in public space, is usually depicted through the prism of the youth, aestheticization, idealization and embellishment, and it is tamed through caricature or ridicule.

Reinforcement of the negative image of old age intensifies the fear of the very natural stage in life of every human being, therefore limiting the opportunity of the insight and narrowing the field for an honest debate among groups which bear the responsibility of getting involved in actions with regard to ageing in a successful way. Rarely do we have a chance to confront ourselves with a serene image of old age, with all the consequences that such picture brings. It is definitely worth remembering that "Old age is also undoubtedly a period of peace, tranquility, freedom and leisure, which can be spent in a creative and useful way"(Nowicka, 2006: 21).

Ageing nicely is being able to see how the youngest generations grow up

It is impossible to escape the impression that the aversion towards the following period in human life and all that is associated with it, is created by a modern culture and the lifestyle which promotes youth, health, strength, beautiful body and performance in all dimensions of human existence (sexual, physical, mental, etc.). Old age is presented as a deviation, illness and taboo, as being the unwanted and not suitable for the culture focused on instant gratification, so-called "Instant Culture" (Melosik, 2000). The lower demand for knowledge, skills and experience of seniors is a consequence of the development of multimedia, breakdown of multi-generational family patterns, individualistic lifestyle of being a family member and re-evaluation of the axiological system. It stems from the consequences of development of technological civilization, as "technical environment reinforces the human sense of control over the environment, and therefore it gets more difficult for humans to comply with the laws of nature. This causes a rebellion against death and old age. The rebellion, which has probably always existed within man, but not in so acute a form as it is now." (Kępiński, 1992:223). The struggle against aging and the wish to halt natural, biological and progressive processes has become one of the major challenges for the contemporary human being.

Despite the alarming reports and statistics that indicate and monitor the ageing process of European societies, demographic decline resulting, inter alia, in the increase in the number of older people in the general population of a given society, there is no coherent state policy dedicated to preparing young people to old age, neither there is a strong and wide support for those who already belong to this group. "Our society has exceeded the threshold of demographic old age in 1968, and from 1950 to 1997 the number of older people tripled, the percentage of older people in population increased from 8.3% to 16.2% (in urban areas the percentage is estimated at 15.4%, in the countryside - 17.6%). Currently, the number of people over 60 years old has exceeded 6 million" (Panek, Szarota, 2000:6). As a result of the growth of the elderly population, the needs of that group are not being fulfilled and their potential is overlooked among activities undertaken on local and global levels. Apart from some exceptional EU projects strictly addressed to the third age people, there are very few proposals targeted at the mobilization of the environment of senior citizens. The educational offer, in terms of supporting the broadly considered human potential in the retirement age, boils down to the University of the Third Age (whose members are usually active people anyway, with secondary and higher education, who would probably do well enough even without the organizational support), Senior Clubs or Day Care Centers, available only to small groups of recipients due to their location, the number of free places and characteristics of activities. A study by W. Wnuk (2012:19) conducted in 2007 in a group of seniors in Lower Silesia indicate that 90% of respondents do not participate in any social organization, and the institutions for the elderly, so-called "Senior Clubs" are attended by only 3.6% of respondents.

Old age in Poland is like a leaf carried by the wind

Barriers which need to be overcome for a person in order to work and be active in the post-productive age may be expressed in several groups of factors, i.e. the group of internal factors - biological (personal development potential, predispositions, susceptibility to diseases, adaptability potential of individuals), a group of psychological factors (attitudes, approach to life, interests, social capital - a network of contacts, the quality of interpersonal relations, openness to others), a socio-economic factors (environment: the place of residence, family structure, roles performed by individuals, the availability of institutions - infrastructure, quality of life resulting from, inter alia, the quota of retirement benefits received). One should not forget about the impact of such factors as health condition, sense of agency and the level of self-esteem, all of which are indirectly conditioned by other factors, which are mutually synergistic.

The above perspective makes it worth considering the demands included in the EurofamcareReport (2008)⁹² that promotes a comprehensive support system for the elderly. The system should include, inter alia, such factors, as training and information, mentoring and consulting, needs analysis, financial benefits and psychological support. The system solutions for the elderly should take into consideration the three basic elements necessary to improve the life quality of the characterized groups, i.e.: integration, mobilization and education of seniors.

The shifting, unstable, pulsating and ever-changing reality makes the problems of the elderly particularly vivid, which due to various forms of discrimination in the broad context of access to economic, social and cultural resources can be considered as a group of the excluded and discriminated. However, social isolation, which is a consequence of marginalization and stigmatization, increases the risk of morbidity and mortality. Individuals in their third age must struggle not only with their own physical infirmities, but also with their ever deeper sense of loneliness and a lack of understanding on the part of the younger generation.

The spheres of life within which the elderly are particularly at risk of marginalization, according to A. Kozubska⁹³, might include: participation in the labor market, participation in outside-the-family relationships, participation in political life, presence in popular culture and in social communication. In addition, the difficulties associated with the inclusion of the elderly in areas critical to their mental and physical condition are amplified and perpetuated by specific mechanisms, such as stigmatization, marking and labeling, which E. Lemert (1980) describes as a process consisting of two stages, i.e. primary and secondary deviance. The first type of deviance consists of traits of behavior inconsistent with the standards that are effective in a given community (in the case of the elderly described in the following paper, the traits are: physical and mental disability,

⁹² *Trans-European Survey Report, Eurofamcare*, [in:] *Raport o kapitale intelektualnym Polski*, Zespół Doradców Strategicznych Premiera, Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów, Warszawa 2008, Warszawa 10.08.2008.

⁹³ Kozubska A., *Wykluczeni 50+ 9na rynku pracy*, Project co-financed by the the European Union under the European Social Fund.

listlessness, forgetfulness and flegmatic character). This stage of marking does not yet create a part of the identity of the person showing specific characteristics or behavior. The nearest surroundings perceive them as incidental, not affecting the image of the individual revealing these features. However, when the initial deviation begins to have a significant impact on the personality of individuals leading to changes in attitudes and role-playing, one can start concluding upon the moment of entering into the next stage of marking, i.e. the secondary deviance. Society, through closest family members, local group and the neighborhood express (directly or indirectly) their negative assessment towards the behavior of the elderly. The act of assigning a deviant role to individuals leads to secondary deviance, the consequence of which is self-perception through the role preliminarily imposed upon a person. The mechanism is dangerous due to the fact that both groups (i.e. the marked and the marking) behave in compliance with the patterns of the imposed roles. The marking perceives the negative labeling process as natural and legitimate, according to changes observed in behavior of the elderly. A conformist submission to the following way of thinking leads to an increase of such phenomena as: social control, punishment, segregation and stigmatization. The marked accept and take over expectations of the marking, behaving accordingly. Negative traits of the deviant at this stage of stigmatization become an integrated part of their identity, affecting self-esteem, motivation, the level of openness to others, creativity, self-confidence, sense of identity and agency. "Deviant receives awards for playing a stereotypical role (e.g. a clumsy old man, who is not able to learn anything new, even something so simple as operating a computer on a basic level). The role of the deviant gradually replaces all other roles" (Synowiec-Piłat, 2012:201).

Entering the role of the deviant can be regarded as a way to adapt to the facts of existing reality (however, it is a manner of coping with the difficulties imposed by the majority instead of being chosen freely by individuals, thus sentencing them to passive submission).

To be happy is to be willing to smile spontaneously

In the context of the theoretical dissertation above, it seems justified to raise the following question: how to counteract the negative stigmatization of the elderly? I believe that the efforts leading to improve the quality of life for seniors should be taken both on the local and on global scale. The main objective should be to bring together various local actors, institutions and organizations into cooperation. They are familiar with the needs of a specific region and the communities they represent (NGOs, associations, foundations, universities, culture workers, church organizations, local governments, health care, social assistance), therefore they can take part in mobilization of the elderly towards making efforts to change the negative image of seniors showed by the media, public opinion, as well as those speaking through the statements made by the representatives of the third age. Recommended goals complement each other

and considered as a whole should provide an opportunity for change towards better perception and improved experience of ageing in our society.

In the context of the debate on old age, the subject of activity in literature is regarded as a factor playing a role in delaying the ageing process, a factor supporting human development and preventing development of many diseases. According to W. Wnuk (2012), the activity of the elderly should be treated holistically, regarding life as a process of development, supporting ageing with dignity, aiming at maintaining physical, mental and social health and order. Among several existing divisions, the field of activity can be divided into formal (participation in associations), informal (contact with family and friends) and solitary (reading, watching TV). Another classification regards the subject of activity in terms of continuity, dividing it into daily activities (responsibilities handled in everyday life), the continued activity (e.g. reading books) and the newly adopted activity (e.g. computer science).

In my opinion, over the last few decades the attitude of the society towards old age and the elderly has changed significantly. The changes, caused by numerous political, socio-cultural and economic factors, have marginalized people of post-productive age, shaping a negative image of this period in human life. An elderly person is considered as a hardly creative one, not adapted to current facts of life, creature "from another era", someone representing the outdated (as impractical) axiological system, a person uncritically tied to religion, having nothing interesting to offer. In the age of computers and instant access to information, lifelong experience of seniors does not matter any more. Therefore, what for centuries used to be the basis for shaping intergenerational relationships, in post-modernity has lost its meaning. Moreover, less frequent contacts between old and young generations (a two-generation instead of multi-generation family model) are not efficient in terms of building proper relationships and positive focus, while observing the natural process of ageing among generations of grandparents. The consequence of the following developments is the ever deeper process of stigmatization of old age and of those who have reached this stage in their life. The young tend to deny the inevitability of the forthcoming ageing process, placing their hope in the achievements of modern medicine. The elderly, however, are gravely suffering the void, loneliness, indifference and aversion that surround them.

Old age is like the setting sun, in other words - faces of old age in own research

In order to verify the assumptions made by the study, I conducted a diagnostic survey on a group of people over 60 years of age, living in the Kłodzko district. The research problem has been formulated in the following questions: how do the elderly perceive themselves? What is the basis they build their image upon? What are the consequences of the social image they adopt?

I assume that the faces of old age may vary substantially, i.e. ranging from definitely positive to absolutely negative shades of the matter in question. Therefore, their characteristics determine the quality of life in the post-productive

age, allowing for the activity in a given environment and providing the feeling of being with others (inclusion), or the conviction of being unnecessary, useless, sick (secondary deviance, stigma), thus leading to exclusion, isolation, degradation and progressive loss of the meaning of life, resulting in reduction of the adaptation potential.

The surveys involved 43 respondents who provided answers to questions contained in the questionnaire. The group included 12 men (29% of the respondents) and 31 women (71% of the respondents), aged between 60 and 90. The beginning of late adulthood period (old age), i.e. 60 years of age, has been determined as such by the World Health Organization (WHO), although the gerontology literature considers a lower limit of old age considering various age criteria, such as registration, calendar or chronological age. Occasionally, the threshold of falling into the category of the elderly is determined by subjective feelings of people taking part in the survey. Most of the respondents represent the range between 60 and 70 years of age (67%). Representatives of this group are reluctant to identify themselves with the term "elderly person", claiming that this stage in their life is still in front of them. Typically, these people are still professionally active, physically fit, trying their best to fulfill the demands of the contemporary world. Another group represented in the study were persons between 71 and 80 years of age (21%), while the least numerous group was represented by respondents aged between 81 and 90 (12%). The last two groups to whom the questionnaire was addressed identified themselves with the category of the elderly significantly more often. Based on the analysis of the correlation between the age of the respondents and the comments accompanying the survey, it can be inferred that the prevailing feeling expressed by participants is subjective and age-related, mainly depending on such factors, as health, fitness level and independence, as well as professional activity.

Vast majority of respondents, i.e. 25 participants (58%) have completed a vocational education, representing such professions, as: cook, salesman, farmer, cleaner, dressmaker. Another group of respondents has graduated from secondary education schools, i.e. 9 respondents (21%), followed by individuals who have completed primary education level: 6 respondents (14%), and 3 respondents with higher education (7%) who, prior to reaching retirement age, worked as teachers and pedagogists. The analysis of the collected data indicates that among the population of the elderly living in small towns, most of the seniors represent professional skills required to perform particular jobs. The results comply with a common belief, prevailing especially in rural areas, that having particular professional skills can guarantee getting a job and is effective in earning a living, whereas education is for the rich and only for those students who have, as one respondent put it, "scientific minds".

Respondents who participated in the study live mainly in rural areas - 23 persons, other respondents in the number of 20 (47%) are the residents of small towns, such as Kłodzko. The economic status of the respondents classifies them within a low-income group, as indicated by the "income per family member" factor. Most of the respondents have marked the monthly income range set between 500 and 1000 zloty. - 22 respondents (51%), the next group who disclosed

an income higher than 1000 zloty - 11 respondents (26%) and revenues ranging between 300 and 500 zloty - 10 respondents (23%). The analysis of the collected data leads to a conclusion that the amount of revenue generated primarily from pensions of contemporary seniors living in small towns is relatively low, and therefore may lead to social exclusion, deprivation, reduced quality of life and in extreme cases, lack of funds necessary to afford basic medicines or medical care. In the context of the following studies, the remaining question that is raised in such circumstances is: how to age beautifully, i.e. with dignity and in prosperity? (*The task was to complete the sentence included in the questionnaire: to age beautifully...*).

Old age is like the end of summer, which also has its charms

Most of the respondents declare they do not feel lonely - 32 participants (14%) and they experience sufficient, in their opinion, level of support and care from their family - 38 respondents (88%). Feeling of safety within the bonds and relationships with relatives shared by respondents is guaranteed by practicing the model of the extended family, as supported by statements of respondents confirming the fact of living with the closest family members, mostly with children, grandchildren and husband/wife. Among the researched group, only five participants are running their households on their own. The data obtained in the study confirm the common model of the traditional family practiced in smaller towns. The model allows to experience different stages of life for several generations in their natural family relationships and everyday situations. Generations of the young shaped in such families stand greater chances of facing old age properly and enter this stage of life more consciously, without feelings of fear, prejudice and stereotypes.

The field of gerontology regards the issue of adequate preparation for old age as a process which should lead to such evolution of life as it would focus not just on survival, but provide an opportunity for continuous development and active participation. Preparations for successful ageing should begin already in youth, through the development of the lifestyle, education, exploration and development of hobbies, passions and interests, as well as taking actions in the local community and nurturing interpersonal relations. Change of mentality and overall attitude is a key element of this process, which is, however, not taken into account by the surveyed seniors living in the Kłodzko district. More than half of the respondents, i.e. 25 participants (58%), believe old age is not a stage of existence to which preparations should begin early in life. I assume that the reason for the following is that the respondents do not have sound knowledge about ageing. It arises from the fact that they do not see the connection between their past experiences and the present way of functioning. Therefore, it seems essential to educate the young in the following respect, e.g. by introducing mandatory classes in gerontology.

When asked - what has the greatest impact on our way of thinking and experiencing old age, out of 10 possible answers included in the questionnaire

(respondents could have chosen up to three answers out of the presented ones), the majority of participants have indicated the following factors, in order of their choices: state of health - 37 respondents (86%), the presence of others around - 26 respondents (60%), the financial status - 16 respondents (37%), religious beliefs - 11 respondents (25%), the current situation we are in - 10 respondents (23%), experience from one's youth - 7 respondents (16%). The analysis of the replies leads to the conclusion that the most significant factors playing a role in experiencing old age, are: state of health, social situation and financial status. The following elements, which constitute the perception of old age among the representatives of the researched group, confirm the assumption that it is necessary to take actions towards maintaining good physical condition. Fulfilling that requirement provides an opportunity for active social participation, preventing individuals from exclusion and secondary deviance. The material factor also plays a significant role, having a direct impact on the sense of security among seniors, which unfortunately leaves a lot to be desired in Polish society. As observed by Z. Szarota "state of health of the elderly is dependent on a number of indicators, such as: level of education, income, lifestyle preferences, the availability of using medical-rehabilitation, hygiene and social services"(2004:38).

Old age is like the necessary evil to be handled with a smile

The elderly perceive their place in contemporary reality in various ways and they adopt different attitudes allowing them to adapt to existing conditions. Some admit that they cannot keep up with the pace of the ongoing changes and challenges they have to face, others are doing their best to cope with the situations they are taking part in, yet still others cut themselves off from what the present brings. D. B. Bromley (1969) has identified five types of adaptation to old age, i.e. constructive attitude (a person representing this type of adaptation is open to contacts with others, exhibits optimistic approach to life, does not show signs of anxiety, is tolerant and aware of their limitations and possibilities, is reconciled with their old age, does well without help of others within the limits of their own health and the conditions of their existence); attitude of dependency (a person showing such attitude to old age exhibits more signs of passivity and dependence on others, is well internally integrated, but relies on the material and emotional support, is reluctant towards undertaking any additional activity, appreciative about passive relaxation patterns at home, not getting involved in interpersonal relations outside the family circle); defensive attitude (a person representing this model of adaptation exhibits neurotic symptoms, is excessively self-controlled and restrained by their habits, rejects help from others, is passive, shows anxiety and pessimistic attitude towards their old age); attitude of hostility (a person showing the following attitude is aggressive, suspicious, unhappy about contacts with others, is depressive, not creative, treats old age as a period of austerity and poverty, defends themselves from the actual stage of life by getting immersed in their professional activity, follows routine and discipline of habitual course of action); attitude of self-directed hostility (person

representing the following pattern of adaptation directs hostility at themselves, is critical, passive, lacking initiative, with a tendency to depression, treating old age as an inevitable and sad stage in life, tolerant of others, feeling lonely and unwanted, not interested in maintaining contact with other people).

When asked about what might hinder the functioning of the elderly in today's world, out of 6 possible answers to choose from, the participants of the survey most frequently referred to: lack of respect for old age and the elderly - 23 respondents (53%), the pace and way of life - 19 respondents (44%), impaired interpersonal relationships, loneliness - 17 respondents (40%), and the development of technology and civilization - 13 respondents (30%). The analysis of the following data leads to the conclusion that the most serious aspects of life in the modern world for the generation of the third age representatives are - the lack of respect for an elderly person and the pace of life, which is too high and intense to keep up with for people in the post-productive age. Both subject areas can be considered together as a part of the characteristics of the contemporary culture which ignores, ridicules and trivializes old age, depriving the society members of fair opportunities to prepare for this stage of life. It also blocks out the environment activation possibilities for seniors and thus prevents this group from joining the intergenerational dialogue.

In the context of previous studies, the content of the reply to a subsequent question confirming or denying the statement that the modern world is not for the elderly, should come as no surprise; the statement implied has been confirmed by 27 respondents (63%).

The absence of ageing issues in the media and public debate leads to the discrimination against the elderly, also in the area where needs satisfaction of the group is taken into consideration. Stereotypical images of old age infer the assumption that the person in the post-productive age does not have excessive needs, which is why the cultural, educational and entertainment offers do not include and regard the elderly as a group of target recipients.

One of the questions in a questionnaire addressed to the seniors includes a scale (from 1 to 5, where 1 means the need goes unmet and 5 means the need is fully satisfied) in order to measure the level of satisfaction of different needs among the elderly. The analysis of the collected data leads to the conclusion that the material needs are fulfilled at a satisfactory level for 21 respondents (48%), at a good level for 10 respondents (23%), and for 6 people (14%) the needs are not satisfied. Nutritional needs are met in full for 17 respondents (39%), while for 14 people (32%) the level of satisfaction has been referred to as good. Health-related needs are sufficiently fulfilled for 14 respondents (32%), whereas for 9 participants (21%) they remained unsatisfied. Another need to be assessed in the survey was the degree of the emotional satisfaction. 14 respondents (32%) believe that their emotional needs are met at a good level, while 12 respondents (28%) assess the level of satisfaction of such needs at a satisfactory level. In terms of cultural-educational needs, for 16 respondents (37%) they are satisfied to a sufficient degree, for further 11 respondents (25%) at a minimum level, and for the remaining 6 respondents (14%) at a good level. Another factor to be assessed by the respondents concerned the level of satisfaction related to the need of

development of personal interests. According to 13 respondents (30%), the need is being met to a minimum, for the same number of respondents it is fulfilled at a good level. The last factor I studied was the need for self-realization (the highest in the hierarchy of the so-called A. Maslow's pyramid of needs). The following need has been sufficiently satisfied for 12 respondents (28%), while at a minimum level - for 10 respondents (23%).

The data collected in the study allow it to conclude that the majority of the elderly declare full satisfaction of their nutritional, physical and emotional needs. Explicit deficits can be observed in the area of health-related needs, which results from the malfunctioning health care system and lack of preventive measures targeted at the elderly. In addition, there are considerable difficulties in access to specialized services. One can also observe unsystematic medical treatment patterns and associated costs, which reduce the level of satisfaction connected with the meeting of health needs, affecting indirectly the active and dignified experience of old age.

Similarly, one can interpret the following results in reference to meeting the cultural, educational and self-realization needs which, according to the respondents, are not being met satisfactorily. I believe that the deprivation taking place in this area is associated with the negative image of the elderly in the contemporary culture, according to which individuals of post-productive age show no interests or needs of self-realization, are generally passive, dependent on others, ailing and therefore they are showing no expectations towards self-development. It may even seem paradoxical to speak of the development of the elderly, while their development is virtually over. As observed by Z. Szarota "The extremely important aspect for the adaptation to old age is the fulfillment of life satisfaction needs, the need for 'the continuity and identity', regardless of the changes taking place in physiological, social and psychological spheres"(2004:45).

Another issue included in the questionnaire of the survey concerned the perception of old age by the respondents. The open-ended question, as follows: What is it that you find the most difficult to endure in old age?, most respondents associated with the following factors: illness and poor health, loneliness, losing the dearest, awareness of transience and decline in mental and physical activity, body weakness, lack of respect for the elderly, the pace and way of life.

In the context of the above statements, another question included in the questionnaire arises, i.e. the question about the positive aspects of ageing. The following aspects of old age have been indicated by 22 respondents (51%), other participants, i.e. 21 respondents (49%), have not seen any good points in the post-productive period. To confirm the positive outlook on the image of old age, the respondents have cited a number of arguments that can be divided into several groups. I have singled out the first group of positive aspects of ageing on the basis of their association with personal development. They are as follows: "Old age means experience and wisdom in decision-making"; "I have got time only for myself and I can do what I find pleasurable"; "One can devote themselves to their passions"; "Reflection upon life until present." Another group of reflections consists of statements related to running activities oriented towards others, mostly to the

closest members of the family circle. These statements are as follows: *"You can truly dedicate yourself to family life"; "One can finally help in raising grandchildren"; "There's eventually more time for the loved ones"*. Another kind of statements has been classified within the group associated with the hallmarks usually connected with old age. These include the following statements: *"At least, there's still a family"; "One can finally take a break from work"; "There is a lot of free time and life goes on without haste"; "I do not have to work, I'm retired, I live with a family who cares about me"; "Lack of discipline in professional duties"*.

In conclusion, the faces of old age can range from extremely negative, dominated by sorrow, poverty, illness, infirmity and loneliness, to overwhelmingly positive, highlighting such features as: activity, independence, development of interests, openness, willingness to cooperate, creativity. Respondents who have completed the questionnaire declare they can observe changes that are taking place in contemporary world, contributing to the disadvantage of the elderly, i.e. the excessive pace of life, lack of respect for the elderly and loosening of the family bonds. However, it seems that people in their post-productive age, living in small towns, do not experience the following changes so severely due to the traditional, multigenerational family model, still prevailing in their societies which decisively reduces the negative effects of aging. What this group notices are mostly: the shortcomings in fulfillment of needs related to health, culture, education and self-realization. Therefore, hardly ever do they have the opportunity to be active outside their family circle and they do not exhibit attitudes oriented towards taking advantage of their experience, knowledge and skills, e.g. in volunteer work (in the U.S., volunteering is the main area of activity for the elderly). They can, however, somehow find the positive side of this stage of life and enjoy it the best they can.

One should bear in mind that presenting active attitude towards the ageing process prevents exclusion and marginalization, provides an opportunity to fight stereotypes depicting the autumn of life, which in the words of one respondent *"drags out at times, but can be full of colors"*. Old age is an opportunity to feel a part of not only the family, but the society as well. Such experience of old age should be the task we are preparing the young generation, through appropriate training, for the development of their interests, encouragement to participate in actions taken for the good of their local communities and by promoting a healthy lifestyle. And for those who have already entered the period of late adulthood, we need to seek systemic solutions, allowing for a holistic approach to the issue of the elderly.

Life Satisfaction and Senior Citizens' Social and Life Activity

Introduction

The European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations celebrated in 2012 inspired a presentation of reflections concerning senior citizens' life satisfaction against the background of their social and life activity. Activity, in accordance with the Regulative Theory of Temperament, is the trait of temperament regulating the stimulating value of behavior and external stimulation for humans. Activity is a tendency to undertake actions providing strong external stimulation (Strelau, 2001). The activity undertaken becomes then a condition for life satisfaction. The question of satisfaction has been often discussed in relation to its conditions at every stage of development. An analysis of life satisfaction of older people is a major issue not only because of the celebrations of the Year of Active Ageing mentioned above (activity is one of predictors of satisfaction) but also because of the growing number of senior citizens within the society.

Growing old is a complex and multidimensional process concerning all spheres of life: biological, social and psychological ones. An individual, as a result of changes happening in one of the spheres, changes the way she/he functions in other. Thus, it is a continuously transforming and mutually determining system. The process of growing old brings about changes in the biological sphere, though physical changes are the most visible and concern, e.g. appearance, impaired hearing, sight, deteriorating agility of organs and susceptibility to diseases. The biological sphere considerably affects the way senior citizens function within their society (Tobiasz-Adamczyk, 2011; Szewcyczak, Stachowka, Talarska, 2012:96-100). Activity of a person, starting from his/her birth until late adulthood, predetermines the stage of old age. The resources accumulated for years, such as the social and economic status, lifestyle, social roles, the network of social relationships, are decisive for e.g. the length of life, prevalence rate, physical independence, and autonomy (Tobiasz-Adamczyk, Brzyska, 2011). Researchers have pointed out the significance of older people's social networks for their everyday functioning. Social networks go beyond the traditional understanding of social relations as family bonds as J. Barnes (Tobiasz-Adamczyk,

Brzyska, 2011) described them. Life of older people in a numerous and accepting environment facilitates their needs satisfaction. Senior citizens, among their family and friends from different communities, neighborhoods, associations, social organizations, professional life and their past, enjoy better health and cope better with difficult and stressful situations. Functioning within such a network or, precisely speaking, participating in social life, satisfies the need for acceptance and integration and results in improvement of mood (Woźniak, 2007:1-2,7-13). A social network is analyzed with reference to the direct number of bonds between the individual and other people and its social and demographic characteristics (Tobiasz-Adamczyk, 2011:120, Janiszewska-Rain, 2005) and is related with the idea of social support (Głębocka, Szarzyńska, 2006). Consequently, a developed social network contributes to the process of meeting needs and, as a result, to the high life satisfaction. A social network can be thus compared to the idea of external and internal space introduced by E. Dubas (2000). The spaces are constructed in relation to the human "I", the core of human identity. The space comprises situations, subjects taking part in the situation, facts, i.e. objects and subjects the person meets and experiences through the senses. That is the external world the individual comes into contact with, which includes constructing social networks and establishing bonds with particular subjects. On the other hand, the internal space includes thoughts and feelings experienced, lived and understood by the person (Dubas, 2000:121-123). Within the social sphere of growing old, the influence of a negative change of the social and economic status on functioning of older people within the social reality has been stressed.

The psychological sphere of the process of growing old comprises declining cognitive processes (Janiszewska-Rain, 2005: 592-599). The late adulthood has been perceived through numerous stereotypes. Older people are often perceived as cantankerous, depressed, decrepit, and lonely. However, research has shown that senior people do not suffer from depression and their sexual drive does not decrease. As age progresses, declining memory or absentmindedness may be observed, but they result from neurodegenerative diseases. Other symptoms of senile dementia are also myths, as levels of intelligence and verbal skills do not decrease significantly, though older people tend to, e.g. forget words. Another myth concerns the inability to learn new things as senior citizens, despite their age, do acquire new skills (Lilienfeld, Lynn, Ruscio, Beyerstein, 2011:107-109) like e.g. operating mobile phones, computers, cash machines, using credit cards. The late adulthood period enforces gradual change in the way people live (Janiszewska-Rain, 2005:600). It is a time of change of the style of life following not only from retiring from professional life but also from adapting to the progressing disability, decreasing number of friends and acquaintances, but also the time of changing forms of activity satisfying the appearing needs (Brzezińska, 2005:610). The old age commonly referred to as the autumn of life is another interesting and prosperous period in life during which older people choose to embark on tasks allowing them to get a high life satisfaction level.

Life satisfaction of U3A students

Reflections on life satisfaction concentrate on different aspects and thus, also because of its broadness, it is very difficult to find the universally accepted definition of the concept. Life satisfaction is a subjective feeling expressing satisfaction from achievements. High life satisfaction results in a good quality of life. Every research instrument measures life quality basing on the model determining the high life quality as opposed to the low one which is a determinant of numerous attributes. Literature on the subject describes two main approaches to life quality of people at the age of late adulthood. One of them attempts to determine the subjective assessment of general life situation of an individual, while the other examines life quality using external dimensions e.g. evaluating health or disability. As it follows from the very definition of life quality, it is a subjective state and, as a consequence, should be evaluated basing on subjective opinions. Life quality reflects the discrepancy between the current life situation of a person and the best possible situation or the ideal subjective state (Martin, Schneider, Eicher, Moor, 2012:33-40).

Research has provided information about the predictors of life quality of a person at the age of late adulthood. It should be stressed that an older person is stereotyped as a disabled, ill, devoid of plans and ambitions. However, the chronological age is not equivalent to low life satisfaction as has already been discussed above. Life quality results from external and internal conditions and requires that a person has got full awareness of his/her own influence on formation of the subjective life satisfaction (Błachnio, 2002:31). Social acceptance for long-term changes and solutions is the necessary condition constituting a prime requirement for the improvement of life quality of senior citizens to be observed (Szarota, 2009). There has been much research into the question of life satisfaction of different age groups and what has been noted is that late adults are happiest of all respondents. The older people get, the greater life satisfaction they feel (Lilienfeld, Lynn, Ruscio, Beyerstein, 2011:107-109). The satisfaction felt results from e.g. health condition, economic status, and the network of relations or activity. Activity is one of major requirements in feeling high life satisfaction, and the participation in senior clubs, universities and trainings enable older people to attain it.

The University of the Third Age is an educational institution aimed at people in late adulthood. Motives for choosing this form of activity differ widely. Late adults wish to experience a substitute of "real" studies at a college or university, to update their knowledge using state-of-the-art technology, maintain their social authority, establish contacts, fill the loneliness and emptiness left after the death of relations. The constantly developed university curriculum offers an intensive program of studies adapted to its students' needs. The offer includes lectures, seminars, language courses, physical exercise, sections and interest groups, trips within Poland and abroad, out-of-doors meetings, marches on special occasions. The concept behind the U3A as an educational institution aimed at the oldest generation is the development of the potential of older people (Wnuk, retr. 2013). The University of the Third Age offers its participants opportunities to satisfy their various needs and interests. The major ones include

educational, cultural, creative, recreational, health-oriented, affiliation needs, the needs of belonging, finding own place, self-fulfillment, identification and active learning. A fully-functioning person satisfies both kinds of his/her needs, physical and psychological ones, the family is the place they should be met. However, because of the nuclear family type or the fact that family members work abroad more and more often, people are lonely staying at their homes. At the same time, a senior citizen loses many friends and acquaintances, which results in the diminishing network of relationships. To re-establish the relationships such a person must enter a new community that can somehow "complement" the network of contacts. Death is a natural phenomenon taking away people we value, respect and honor. However, it is hard to function without people, not to mention their virtues and friendship, and so older people must seek new relationships. The University offers opportunities for establishing and maintaining new bonds.

The University of the Third Age fulfils important roles within the academic community. Its functions include: offering attractive leisure opportunities, satisfying the need for social relationships, providing a chance of acquiring new competencies necessary to overcome the stress related to old age and developmental crises. The U3A provides older people with psychological support, releases strength, stimulates, teaches how to preserve health, how to creatively accept diseases, disability, how to engage sensitively in family or community problems. It helps to prevent feelings older people so often experience, such as loneliness, social isolation and lack of attention on the part of the society. Its goals include prolonging the time of cognitive, social and physical activity, creative life, shaping adaptive abilities thus striving for the improvement of life quality of the oldest generation (Wnuk, retr. 2013). Promotion of social involvement of senior citizens by popularizing education constitutes an element of both health promotion and disease prevention in the very age group (Woźniak, 2007:1-2, 7-13). Older people start seeking contacts with other people, occupation and work that can meet their needs. Senior citizens want not only to be needed but wish to carry out tasks entrusted to them and providing them opportunities for self-fulfillment.

Activity and its nature

Free or spare time is a cultural and philosophical category, and thus displays different value for every individual. For older adults it means the time without the characteristics of professional activity performed so far (Olszewski, 2003:92). Literature presents two approaches to spare time spending models. One includes the concept of "excess free time" concerning pensioners and the unemployed, the other one, the so-called "time deficit" concept includes workaholics (Halicka, Halicki, 2002:203).

Literature contains different approaches to activity older adults engage in during their leisure. The activity is often defined as the inclination to intensive action, e.g. undertaking a variety of initiatives or active participation.

Elaborating on this definition A.A. Zych states that activity is a way of experiencing reality, a cognitive quality manifested in physical and intellectual actions conditioned by personality factors (Zych, 2001:19). Activity influences an individual within three spheres: knowledge, skills and attitudes. Thus, activity means actions performed by a human being within various spheres of life resulting in creating a new quality. The environment, interpersonal relations, independence, fitness and health play a vital role in stimulating activity. Authors of the social gerontology foundations write that activity of every man is her/his own way of communicating with other people and the world. It should be noted that the above communication takes place as a result of old people's engagement in various initiatives. Communication is a two-way process where not only the older person acts but is also subject to actions and therefore may be defined as a process of direct and indirect action and cooperation.

A. Kamiński (from Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski, Dziegielewska, 2006:162) considers the activity of older adults in terms of two categories. One of them regards performing valued and useful work, while the other one refers to pursuing hobbies and interests. H. Balicka –Kozłowska defines the term of activity in a different way, stressing the fact that it refers to a variety of actions aiming at retardation of the aging process simultaneously forming in the elderly the capability of "being older" (Balicka-Kozłowska, 1986).

Activity is a set of actions performed by an individual owing to which changes in the spheres of his/her knowledge, skills and attitudes occur. Activity is always connected with active participation in tasks resulting in the creation of a new "quality". The effect of activity is the fulfillment of the affiliation need, the need to be needed, the feeling of satisfaction and contentment.

Activity may be divided into 3 types: formal, informal and solitary. The first type, the formal one, is defined as membership in social organizations, voluntary service, work for the local community, participation in politics, etc. Another type, the informal activity, includes contacts with friends, acquaintances, family and neighbors. The latter solitary activity refers to such actions as watching television, reading, following one's hobbies and interests (Szatur-Jaworska, Błędowski, Dziegielewska, 2006:161). Every activity type results in particular transformations in the life of individuals. The opposite of the activity is "doing nothing", watching television, listening to the radio or reading magazines or books without reflection or choice.

Research performed in Poland - GUS (1990), Szatur-Jaworska (2006), Trafiałek (2003), Halicka, Halicki (2002) etc., shows that the majority of senior citizens spend their spare time in a passive way. The problem of low participation in social life is also stressed by Beata Wojszel (2002). The author refers to the study of 1993 by P. Czekanowski, which states that nothing has changed in this respect (Wojszel, 2002:30). All studies so far have supported each other. B. Wojszel points to p. Czekanowski's results and stresses that during the period of social and political transformations Poland has failed to create the climate conducive to establishing organizations integrating senior adults with the society. Moreover, the old age model popularized does not include activity at all (Wojszel, 2002:30-31).

Writing about older people's activity, it should be remembered that literature specifies three theories of adaptation to the old age, including: the theory of activity, theory of withdrawal and the theory of old age stress. The first one regards an aging person as a social phenomenon amassing tensions connected with the self-image concept that appears when changes in the roles played so far occur. To face the situation, a senior person should be active to the extent her/his health and fitness allow. Thus, the person finds supplementary activities and establishes new relationships (Zych, 2001:218). "The activity theory has been created to explain older adults' behavior in the situation where "I" is in control. The decision on the kind and intensity of their own activity depends on the seniors' own and other people's assessment of their own prestige and behavior in connection with their status (Olszewski 2003:90). In the theory of withdrawal, an ageing person keeps limiting her/his own activity, consequently, her/his social relations become weaker and, as a result, withdrawal from the social life occurs (Zych, 1995:38). The latter stress theory argues that critical events in the life of an older adult act as a stressor. Such critical events may include loss of health, disability, lower social or material prestige.

The fact of taking up activity may be regarded as serving the functions of (Matczak, 2003:48):

- adaptation – helps old people to adjust better to functioning in their new social and family situation,
- integration – contributes to better adjustment to the group the senior citizens belong to,
- compensation – helps to compensate for deficiencies in other respects (e.g. absence of professional work, insufficient knowledge),
- education – helps to develop and perfect personality features and predispositions,
- recreation and entertainment – helps to eliminate stress, restore will of life, fills in the free time,
- psychic hygiene – allows people to feel satisfaction, may advance self-esteem and, consequently, leads to improvement of life quality (Szatur – Jaworska, Błędowski, Dziegielewska, 2006:164).

Positive effects of starting any activity are wide-ranging if functions it fulfils are considered. The importance of older people's activity is still underestimated as only due to it senior citizens do not feel isolated and rejected. Activity taken up by the elderly builds their relationship with the outside world with which they interact and in which they experience all that is worthwhile and valuable.

Types of seniors' activity

Activity is a consequence of a lifestyle. All kinds of activity are determined by: age, sex, health condition, education, social and economic status and lifestyle (Trafiałek, 2003:169). Olga Czerniawska proposes five distinct activity styles: passive, family-centered, social, gardening, house-centered (2000, p. 170-174). M. Halicka and J. Halicki offer 5 other types of activity including: recreation

and hobby, receptive activity, public-oriented activity, integrative activity, other types of activity (2002:207).

Another model distinguishes seven activity types (Szatur – Jaworska, Błędowski, Dzięgielewska, 2006:163). The first one is the home and family-centered activity consisting in various actions connected with running a household and with the life of the closest family. The next type is the cultural activity manifesting itself as mainly urban lifestyle and including, e.g. reading, watching television, listening to the radio, making the most of cultural institution offer and attending seniors' clubs. Professional activity satisfies the need of recognition and of feeling useful. It prevents the seniors' social position from worsening, makes them feel better and improves self-evaluation of their health condition. Social activity is least common among senior citizens and is mainly taken up by people who were already activists before retirement. It seems that during the later years of life the importance of religious activity increases through more frequent participation in religious practices. The last activity type refers to recreation and includes leisure, physical activity and pursuing most favorite pastimes such as gardening

The starting points for the above typologies are different criteria for categorizing activity. Another proposition based on those classifications puts forward three basic activity categories: active, mixed and passive into which particular activity types fall. Analyses have shown that the following activity types should be recognized as active ones: social (voluntary work, participation in political parties, clubs, societies and organizations), educational (University of the Third Age, public lectures), recreation and physical activity (gardening, walking, tourism), religion, professional activity (income generating, i.e. continued professional activity or work not connected with occupation – nursing), cultural activity (opera, philharmonic concerts, theatre, cinema). The mixed, active and passive, category includes actions associated with home and family, while the passive category, house-centered could be understood in two ways: as a reflexive (active and careful content selection) or unreflective, i.e. “doing nothing” – unselective passive television watching, listening to the radio, watching passers-by through the window.

The aim and method

My research so far has concentrated on life satisfaction of older people living in Nursing Homes in Poland, the USA and Germany. Their activity, however, is limited on the one hand to the offer put forward by the institution they stay in, on the other hand, determined by the health condition of residents. The research results pointed out to the high level of life satisfaction and encouraged me to study opinions on life satisfaction expressed by senior citizens living on their own or with their families (Molesztak, 2008:50–65). As has been established earlier, the activity of Nursing Home residents is connected with the offer of the institution, therefore, my next study aimed at determining the activity of retired teachers – members of the Senior Club of the Polish Teachers' Association (ZNP)

against their life satisfaction. Senior clubs are “institutions of social normalization preventing the feeling of loneliness, social isolation and uselessness that at the same time support intellectual and creative capabilities of older people” (Szarota, 2009:87). The results pointed to the need of continuing research into evaluation of life satisfaction of senior citizens – U3A students and older people living in the rural community.

The aim of the research is to determine life satisfaction against the background of social and life activity of older people. Because of the limited space, the article focuses on one chosen research problem following from the research goal, namely: What is the life satisfaction of senior citizens against the background of their social and professional activity?

The results were statistically analyzed for every variable determining the mean value and standard deviation. To verify the significance of differences between groups, the parametric analysis of variance was used. Differences showing values below 0.05 of statistic significance were recognized as statistically significant. The Statistica PL v. 8.0 software was used for the purpose of statistic calculations.

The study uses the diagnostic poll method, a survey based on a questionnaire. The participants were asked to rate on a scale of 7 (very satisfied) to 1 (very dissatisfied) what they considered their happiness level to be, its conditions, satisfaction with standards of living and self-satisfaction. The research participants included U3A students in a province capital and a little town, members of the Senior Club of the Polish Teachers’ Association (ZNP) and residents of rural communities. U3As provide their students a wide and interesting educational offer. The analysis of the programs proposed by the U3A and the ZNP Senior Club has shown that the offer is attractive and facilitates the participation in classes and meetings. The U3A offers cyclic meetings, while the Senior Club members meet cyclically at organized activities.

The study included 219 people, 137 U3A students, 43 ZNP Senior Club meetings participants and 39 residents of rural communities. There were 140 women, 68 men and 11 respondents that did not state their sex in the survey. The youngest participant was 55 years old, while the oldest one was 91. The average respondent was 67.73 years old with the standard deviation of 14.43. The largest group included respondents aged 59-65, which most probably follows from the fact that they have retired not very long ago and are in good health.

The respondents were asked to provide details of their education: 40 senior citizens graduated from colleges or universities, 33 people have secondary education, 15 – vocational, 47 – lower secondary, and 83 – elementary education, 2 people did not answer the question. 123 respondents are married, 21 are single, 16 - divorced, 54 - widows or widowers, and 5 people did not provide the information. An analysis of the social and demographic structure of the group provides the basis for subsequent reflections on activity and life satisfaction.

Standards of living in older people's opinion

Life satisfaction includes also opinions of respondents on different aspects of everyday social life, in my earlier articles referred to as domains of life quality. Table 1 below shows the opinions including four domains of life with reference to mean values and standard deviations. All respondents are most satisfied with their accommodation – that is the highest satisfaction expressed, with similar standard deviation values. Respondents living in rural communities are the least satisfied group. The aspect that generally received worse evaluation by the group is the money they earn, though the opinion seems to be partly positive. The comparison of the groups in the study shows that the ZNP Senior Club members are the least satisfied. They all have university education and, therefore, might believe that they deserve better pay for their work. More dissatisfaction is observed with respect to their feeling of being provided for and life security as they are least satisfied with their savings - the group expressing the lowest satisfaction level is once again the group of ZNP Senior Club members.

Table 1. Chosen life satisfaction domains of Nursing Home residents (M – mean)

| satisfaction domains | U3A Big city | | U3A little town | | ZNP Senior Club | | Rural area | | Σ | |
|----------------------|--------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|---------------|------|------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| accommodation | 5.43 1 | 1.19 | 5.3 | 1.44 | 5.37 | 1.54 | 4.02. 2002 | 1.5 | 5.16 | 1.45 |
| earned money | 4.23 2 | 1.29 | 4.32 | 1.3 | 3.41 | 1.76 | 4.26 1 | 1.37 | 4.1 | 1.46 |
| savings | 3.74 4 | 1.57 | 3.56 | 1.58 | 2.51 | 2.03 | 3.89 4 | 1.47 | 3.48 | 1.71 |
| life security | 4.09 3 | 1.41 | 3.63 | 1.7 | 3.36 | 1.99 | 3.92 3 | 1.46 | 3.79 | 1.63 |

Source: own study. Numbers in the lower line refer to the position with respect to the mean average.

Generally, it may be noticed that respondents living in rural communities show the lowest life satisfaction level in the domain of accommodation, while the remaining groups do not show differences as far as the mean is concerned. In the case of earned money and savings, a similar tendency has been observed, while the least satisfied group included retired teachers.

Though the results of this study provide data concerning the average level of evaluation for the domain, it cannot be concluded that the same mean value will be shown in the case of the whole population. The value is similar to that calculated in the study but, in order to establish how close it is to the tested sample, the so-called confidence intervals for the required value should be determined. On the basis of the sample, it is possible to establish intervals within which the real value of the required measure is included with the assumed probability of 95%. The mean accommodation satisfaction level among older people has been

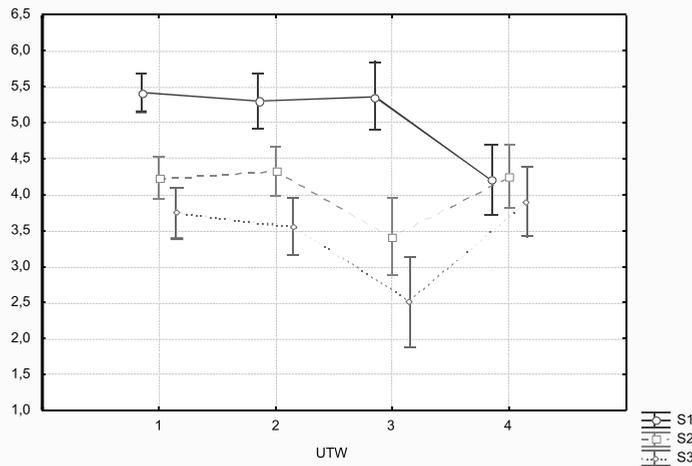
estimated at 5.16. The statistic calculation has shown that there is a 95% probability that the actual accommodation satisfaction level among older people is between 3.8 and 5.65. Older people living in the countryside show the lowest level of satisfaction with accommodation. Another domain concerns satisfaction with money earned. The general mean value is 4.1, while there is a 95% probability that the real mean satisfaction with money earned by older people is between 2.9 and 4.6. Once again, the lowest values have been calculated for the group of retired teachers, which points to the fact that these respondents believe they deserve more than they get. The mean value for satisfaction with savings amounts to 3.4, while the confidence interval for the domain is between 1.9 and 4.4. As in the previous domains, the least satisfied group includes retired teachers from the ZNP Senior Club. The remaining groups are within the same confidence level.

It may be thus concluded that the confidence level for all respondents is similar and, consequently, the differentiation within the comparable group of older people is similar.

A list of mean values and confidence intervals

S1- accommodation, S2 – money earned, S3 – savings

1-U3A Big city; 2- U3A Little town, 3 - ZNP Senior Club , 4 - Rural area



The proposed hypothesis focused on the question of the type of undertaken activity (U3A) differentiates participants of the research. The analysis uses parametric statistics as the number of respondents exceed 100. The results are presented in the table 2 below.

Table 2. Analysis of variance, significant results with $p < 0.05$

| Life satisfaction domains | F | P |
|----------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Accommodation | 7,6 | 0,001 |
| money earned | 4,19 | 0,01 |
| Savings | 6,43 | 0,001 |
| life security | 2,17 | 0,09 |

No correlation has been found at the significant level of satisfaction with particular domains with respect to the age of respondents.

Self-satisfaction of senior citizens in the research

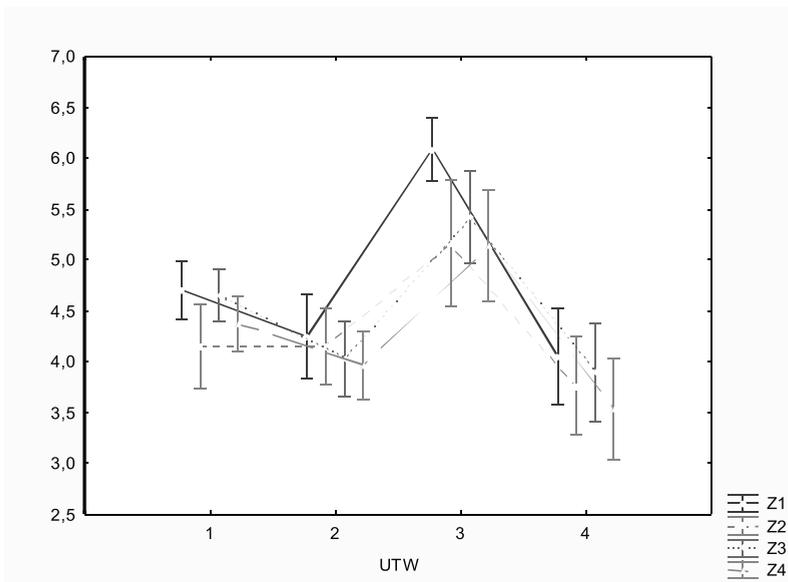
The determination of self-satisfaction involved all nine domains. Generally, the mean value of satisfaction with education for all participants of the study amounts to 4.74. Older people living in rural communities are least satisfied ($M=4.05$), while the mean value for other groups was higher (U3A-dm <big city> $M=4.7$ U3A -mm <little town> $M=4.25$ ZNP - $M=6.09$). Subsequent domains show lower values. Opportunities for personal development are generally estimated at the level of 4.26, and the results for particular groups are: UTW-dm $M=4.15$, UTW -mm $M=4.15$, ZNP - $M=5.17$ and M -w =3.76. The highest value in the domain is shown by the results for the group of retired teachers, which probably follows from their position of educated people aware of lack of knowledge. Spiritual development is another important sphere in the human life. Seeking the meaning of life and answers to the questions “Where am I going?”, “What do I long for?” are crucial for human life. This domain received low evaluation in every group in question. The universal mean satisfaction with spiritual development is $M= 4.49$, while for particular groups the value amounts to: UTW-dm $M=4.65$; UTW -mm $M=4.03$; ZNP - $M=5.43$ and M-w=3.89. Similarly to the former domain retired teachers expressed the highest satisfaction level with spiritual development. Another life satisfaction domain concerns participation in culture, where the most highly valued and at the same time the most satisfied group is the group of the ZNP Senior Club members $M=5.15$. The lowest mean value is shown by the older people living in rural communities ($M=3.54$). The results for retired teachers provide evidence as to their frequent and numerous participation in all types of cultural entertainment. It should be noted that the entertainment is not free; even if respondents buy discount tickets, the prices are not low. Older people most often visit museums, what is the most probably connected with the trips organized for them. Over 50% of respondents go to the opera a few times a year, go to concerts and to the cinema (in descending order). There are people who cyclically, twice a month, participate in some forms of entertainment. Retired teachers from the ZNP Senior Club take part in many different kinds of entertainment, including concerts, performances, exhibitions and films and, perhaps because of that, in comparison with the other groups,

highly value the culture they incessantly enjoy. Other results seem to confirm their desire to pursue their hobbies and interests. In comparison with the other groups, the mean value amounts here to $M=4.47$. The highest level of joy of life is displayed by U3A students: UTW- dm $M=5.26$, ZNP Club $M=5.19$. The group with the greatest satisfaction with life achievements also includes ZNP Senior Club members - $M=5.2$ who show also the highest satisfaction with future perspectives, though the level is slightly lower in comparison with previous results $M=4.4$. Results for work satisfaction are particularly interesting as, despite the low satisfaction with money earned and savings, retired teachers are the most satisfied group in the domain of work $M= 5.71$. Work satisfaction is an important predictor of life quality. U3A students in a big city are less satisfied with their work - $M=3.1$ and thus, it may be stated they are dissatisfied with it. Work has been evaluated at the level of $M= 4.29$ by senior citizens living in rural communities.

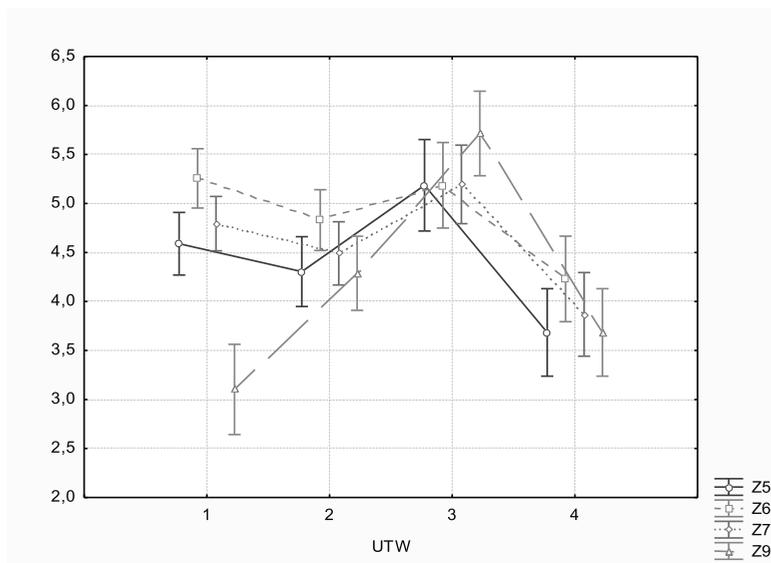
Table 3. Chosen life satisfaction domains of Nursing Home residents (M – mean)

| satisfaction domains | U3A Big city | | U3A little town | | ZNP Senior Club | | Rural area | | Σ | |
|---|--------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|------------|------|----------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| satisfaction with education | 4,7 | 1,29 | 4,25 | 1,57 | 6,09 | 1,01 | 4,05 | 1,45 | 4,74 | 1,52 |
| opportunities for personal development, | 4,15 | 1,79 | 4,15 | 1,47 | 5,16 | 1,84 | 3,76 | 1,48 | 4,26 | 1,71 |
| spiritual development; | 4,65 | 1,14 | 4,03 | 1,43 | 5,43 | 1,39 | 3,89 | 1,5 | 4,49 | 1,43 |
| participation in culture; | 4,37 | 1,21 | 3,97 | 1,3 | 5,15 | 1,73 | 3,54 | 1,54 | 4,26 | 1,4 |
| pursuing hobbies and interests, | 4,59 | 1,41 | 4,3 | 1,37 | 5,19 | 1,52 | 3,68 | 1,36 | 4,47 | 1,48 |
| joy of life, | 5,26 | 1,34 | 4,83 | 1,19 | 5,19 | 1,42 | 4,23 | 1,37 | 4,94 | 1,36 |
| Life achievements, | 4,79 | 1,23 | 4,49 | 1,24 | 5,2 | 1,27 | 3,87 | 1,3 | 4,63 | 1,31 |
| Future prospects | 3,97 | 1,29 | 3,98 | 1,6 | 4,4 | 1,76 | 4,05 | 1,41 | 4,07 | 1,49 |
| work satisfaction. | 3,1 | 2,04 | 4,29 | 1,45 | 5,71 | 1,38 | 3,68 | 1,36 | 4,03 | 1,9 |

Statistic calculations have shown that there is a 95% probability that the real mean satisfaction level with particular domains concerning self-satisfaction is within the stated limits shown in Figures below.

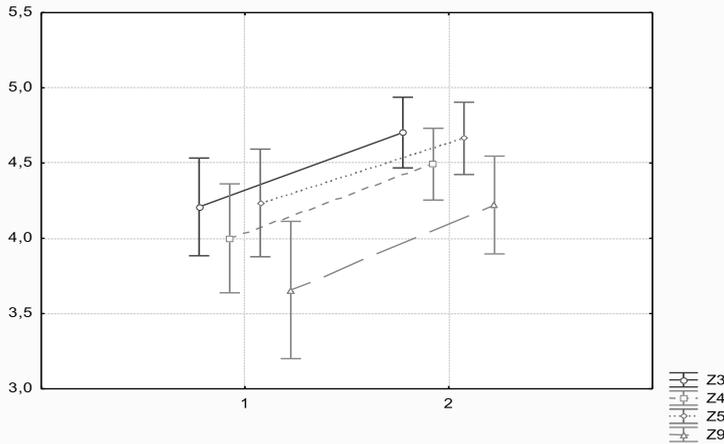


1-U3A Big city; 2- U3A little town, 3 - ZNP Senior Club , 4 - Rural area
 Z1- satisfaction with education; Z2 – opportunities for personal development, Z3- spiritual development; Z4 – participation in culture; Z5 - pursuing hobbies and interests, Z6 – joy of life, Z7 – life achievements, Z9- work satisfaction.

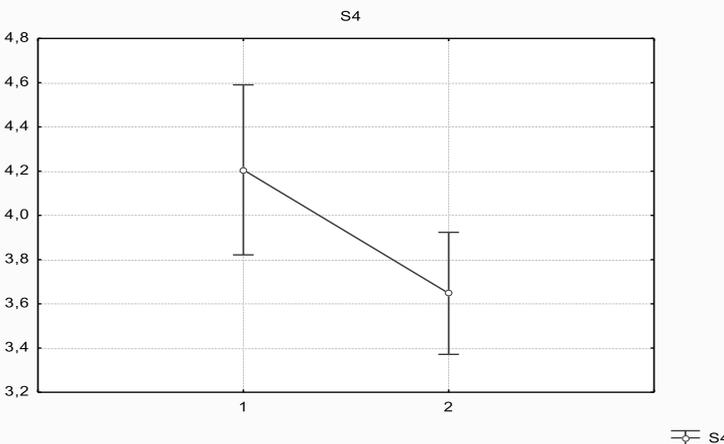


The highest confidence intervals have been established for retired teachers taking advantage of the ZNP Senior Club offer, followed by U3A students in a big city, U3A students in a little town and senior citizens living in rural communities.

Reflections on life satisfaction continue with the analysis of self-satisfaction with respect to sex of respondents. The most significant differences have been observed within four domains: spiritual development, participation in culture, pursuing interests and work satisfaction. In every domain women are more satisfied than men, which results in higher confidence intervals. Work satisfaction is at the lowest level for men. The graph below shows life security to illustrate the comparison between evaluations of satisfaction domains by both sexes.



The figure above graphically presents mean values and confidence intervals for life security for men and women. Men ($M=4.2$) are more satisfied with life security than women ($M=3.64$). There is a visible difference as women wish for a higher level of life security.



Older people's life satisfaction

During the analysis of the responses to the question about life satisfaction it has been observed that all respondents are happy. The happiest are U3A students living in a big city $M=5.05$, followed by ZNP senior Club members $M=4.42$, U3A students in a little town $M=4.38$ and rural areas residents who are the least happy $M=4.2$, thus, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents are happy.

To evaluate life satisfaction Ed Diener measure was used. Respondents answered five questions using the 1-to-7 scale. Results of the study are presented in Table 3 below. The research did not include retired teachers of the ZNP Senior Club, and thus involved 176 respondents. As follows from the data in the study, 52.84 % of respondents are satisfied with their life and 39.2% are dissatisfied. Comparing the records, it has been found out that the majority of U3A students express their satisfaction with life as opposed to 66.66% respondents living in rural communities who are dissatisfied with their lives. Previously described studies point to widespread stereotypes determining the way older people are perceived, such as their vices, disabilities or lack of satisfaction. The groups of respondents confirm the research results. In order to identify the conditions determining the satisfaction level in this group, further research is planned.

Table 4. Older people's life satisfaction

| Interpretation | U3A – big city | % | U3A - little town | % | older people in rural communities | % | Σ | % |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|-------|-----|-------|
| very satisfied | 3 | 3.85 | 4 | 6.78 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 3.98 |
| Satisfied | 25 | 32.05 | 7 | 11.86 | 1 | 2.56 | 33 | 18.75 |
| moderately satisfied | 23 | 29.49 | 19 | 32.2 | 11 | 28.22 | 53 | 30.11 |
| Neutral | 6 | 7.69 | 7 | 11.86 | 1 | 2.56 | 14 | 7.95 |
| moderately dissatisfied | 14 | 17.95 | 13 | 22.03 | 19 | 48.72 | 46 | 26.14 |
| Dissatisfied | 5 | 6.41 | 6 | 10.16 | 6 | 15.38 | 17 | 9.67 |
| very dissatisfied | 2 | 2.56 | 3 | 5.08 | 1 | 2.56 | 6 | 3.41 |
| Σ | 78 | 100 | 59 | 100 | 39 | 100 | 176 | 100 |

An analysis of particular statements on general life satisfaction shows the mean value for every question. The question on life quality has received the highest evaluation from respondents, though every group displays the mean value higher than 4. The most satisfied group includes U3A students in a big

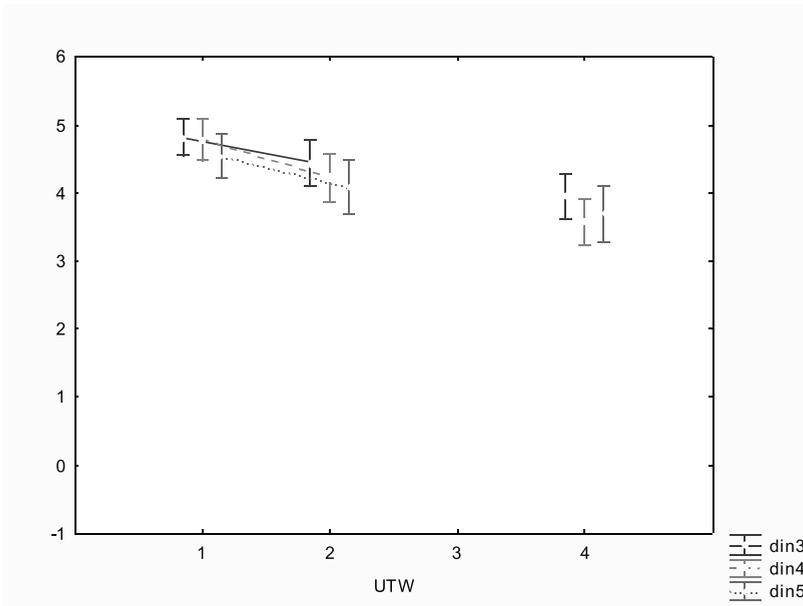
city, while residents of rural areas show the lowest satisfaction level for every statement.

Results of the research provide mean levels for particular domains but do not allow a conclusion that the whole population has the same average value of the feature. To demonstrate how similar it is to the sample the so called confidence intervals may be determined. On the basis of the sample, intervals can be calculated including the real value of the measure in question with a 95% probability. The graph XX shows mean values of particular domains and confidence intervals. The mean life satisfaction (din3) amounts to 4.5. The figure is a graphic representation of the mean values and confidence intervals for every group. With the help of statistic calculations it has been determined that there is a 95% probability the real average life satisfaction level among older people is between 5.1 and 4.5 for U3A students-dm. 4.1 and 4.9 –U3A-mm and 3.6 and 4.25 for rural areas residents.

The statement “I have achieved the most important things I wanted in life” (din4) demonstrates the difference between the groups in the study with respect to mean values and confidence intervals. The lowest results have been recorded for the last statement “If I could live my life once again I would not like to change nearly anything”. As follows from the confidence intervals on the graph the balance of life shows what bad decisions could have been avoided or changed.

Table 5. Life satisfaction domains

| satisfaction domains | U3A Big city | | U3A little town | | Rural area | | Σ | |
|--|-----------------|------|--------------------|------|------------|------|----------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| 1. life close to ideal (din1) | 4.15 | 1.46 | 4.05 | 1.21 | 3.55 | 1.11 | 3.99 | 1.32 |
| 2. My life conditions are perfect (din2) | 4.12 | 1.2 | 3.81 | 1.26 | 3.61 | 1.15 | 3.9 | 1.22 |
| 3. I am satisfied with my life (din3) | 4.82 | 1.2 | 4.44 | 1.28 | 3.95 | 1.02 | 4.5 | 1.23 |
| 4. I have achieved the most important things I wanted in life (din4) | 4.78 | 1.35 | 4.22 | 1.33 | 3.58 | 1.03 | 4.33 | 1.36 |
| 5. If I could live my life once again I would not like to change nearly anything (din5) | 4.54 | 1.41 | 4.08 | 1.5 | 3.68 | 1.23 | 4.2 | 1.43 |



Summary and conclusions

1. The research conducted sanctions a few statements. First, the least satisfied group includes older people living in rural communities, while retired teachers are the group least satisfied with the money earned and savings. With age a change in importance attached to satisfying particular needs is observed. Senior citizens highly value the satisfaction of their life security need, while the significance of needs for prestige and aspirations gradually decrease. As follows from the above study, retirement from work is associated with the deteriorating material status of older people (Wesołowska, 2006, 23-25).
2. The studies conducted provide the basis for the statement that the confidence interval for all respondents is similar. Therefore, the differentiation within the comparable groups is analogous.
3. Participation in U3A does not differentiate the groups in the study. No significant correlation has been noticed between particular domains of life satisfaction and the age of respondents.
4. U3A students most highly value education and opportunities for personal development.
5. Despite the low satisfaction with earned money and savings the ZNP Senior Club members are the group most satisfied with their work.
6. Retired teachers are the group showing highest self-satisfaction that means they show the high level of psychological needs satisfaction. They are also most satisfied with education, work and spiritual development.

Their spirituality may have external (religious services) or internal forms, may stimulate their courage, the will to fight and/or form foundations of the strong belief system (Stelcer, 2006:248). The research has shown that with age the religious activity increases and is high among late adults.

7. No correlation between age and the analyzed domains of satisfaction with standards of living, self-satisfaction and life satisfaction has been found.
8. Senior citizens who are very active in their free time achieve higher life satisfaction, which means that the more active they are, the higher their life satisfaction gets. Moreover, older people with university and secondary education enjoy better life satisfaction.

To conclude I would like to quote Maria Braun-Gałkowska:

(...) In order to turn to it, the interior cannot be empty. In old age we have a bigger than before chance to intensify our internal life but, to be intensified, the life must have existed there before. Old age may be the crown of life but it cannot be its beginning. If we had developed our internal life before, we have now the place to turn to and something to refine. If we fail to do it in time, in old age we have nothing to do but listen attentively to our own body, less and less healthy and less and less beautiful" (1990: 202-203).

Gerontological Education and its Formation in Russia

In modern society worldwide profound changes are taking place. First of all, it should be noted that significant changes in the demographic situation are taking place in society. The achievements of modern medicine, and the general improvement of the quality of life led to a serious increase in life expectancy. But the pace of human activity in the post-industrial period, as well as other factors, led to a decline in fertility.

The consequence of this situation has been a phenomenon that sociologists call “the rapid aging of the population”. That is, according to statistics, gradual increase in the average age of members of the society. Another feature of modern industrial and social relations is the continuous upgrading of technologies used. In order to take full advantage of them, you should regularly obtain additional knowledge about their operation.

Under these circumstances, the concept of lifelong learning is particularly important. Continuing education involves the construction of a person-centered model of continuing education of the individual. According to this concept, at the end of the classical education (school, university), human learning extends alongside its work. It is carried out either continuously or intermittently. In this study, disciplines depend on the sphere of human activity.

Adaptation of educational models for the older generation has resulted in the development of a new and very important concept in pedagogy –gerontological education (gerontoobrazovanye). Currently, gerontological education means continuing education addressed to people of pre-retirement and retirement age. The specifics of the goals and tasks of the gerontological education, leading to its formation as a separate dedicated system composed of the same elements as education in general, but designed for people of pre-retirement and retirement age.

The main purpose of gerontological education is to preserve the social activity of citizens of retirement or the so-called “third” age. The designated purpose is achieved, on the one hand, through the preservation of the intellectual potential of the students, on the other hand, through their association in social gerontological groups, thus enhancing social activity of older persons, as well as introducing them to new social phenomena and gadgets.

Another goal of gerontological education is to maintain and improve the economic and productive activity of people of retirement age (Nikonov, 2007). It should be noted that in the current model of industrial relations experience

and knowledge from the old experts are still in demand. However, they need additional knowledge about the latest technologies in order to understand the changes. The tasks included the provision of such knowledge as part of gerontological education.

Providing social, economic and industrial activity for the third age can improve quality of life, raise self-esteem, ensure active social interaction between people of different generations. In turn, the achievement of these objectives reduces social tensions (Gorshunova, 2012).

The development of gerontological education as an independent system began relatively late, in mid-20th century. For example, in Finland the first university for the elderly was opened more than sixty years ago. In the sixties, work in this field began in Japan. Professor Pierre Vella opened the first third-age university in France. This school, along with training events, conducted research on the topic. In the UK, gerontological education was implemented through the "University of the Third Age", which appeared in the eighties. Such institutions exist in the United States, Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy and other countries.

Educational goals of these institutions in different countries vary according to characteristics specific to a given society. For example, in the Netherlands, the educational objectives include training to adapt to ongoing changes for the third age, and in Italy - the completion of secondary education.

Domestic system of gerontological education began in the first half of the twentieth century. It consisted of a system of public schools, courses, lectures and universities the access to which is given to residents of all villages and towns. In 1947, the All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge ("Knowledge" for short) was established - a public organization, which among other things was also responsible for the further development of gerontological education in our country. The relevant legislation adopted later governed the operation of such schools and officially recognized gerontological education as a form of public education.

Persons of retirement age took an active part in the activities undertaken by Society. Specialized educational activities were designed for veterans and retired officials. However, at that time, there was no development of evidence-based special education programs for the elderly, based on physiological and psycho-functional personality traits of the retirement age. Prominent figures of the Russian culture, art and science became involved in the development of gerontological education, creating their own training programs, based on their years of experience.

Since 1996, the "Knowledge" Society has opened people's universities of the third age. They have developed specialized training programs allowing for the perception of information by the older generation, and for medical recommendations. The People's University of the Third Age has begun to actively conduct research work and has intensively studied the international experience. There are scientists and educators who specialize in this area.

The network of the People's Universities of the Third Age covers many cities in Russia, from St. Petersburg to the Far East. In the first years after the establishment an applied orientation of the studied materials prevailed. The universities

taught applied agriculture, skills such as cutting, sewing, knitting, crafts, arts, and meanwhile studied applied aspects of medicine. Then, the list of disciplines covered began to expand. There are computer courses and law courses. Drawing on the experience of research activities, in 2010-2011 the "Knowledge" Society started the development of new educational projects working with people of the third age.

The projects began in 2012 with the introduction of the learning process in a specially developed educational unit "Gerontological Education in Russia." Note that the unit devised was approved and supported by the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation. The objectives of the projects implemented include training of older generation, definitely resolving the arising problems of modern social life, social adaptation, active public involvement in creative and intellectual life, equipping them with the knowledge of modern technologies, skills and ability to use them. The solution of these problems contribute to the quality of life of the students and their social status in the community, allowing them to remain active participants in the production and social relations in the society.

There are currently four lines formed in the gerontological education: practical skills, the study of art, increasing computer literacy, and continuing education. Each of these areas is characterized by its own target audience, which has its own value judgments. Accordingly, each has formed its own spectrum of disciplines.

The practical skills focus on learning the basics of medicine, practical gardening, sewing, and knitting. They take into account the aims of the target group in this field, which are to increase their social activity through increased social contact and better communication with others. The participants are also pleased to be involved in various cultural activities as well as organization of free time - one of the main objectives pursued by the representatives of this category of students.

A somewhat different picture emerges in the study of art. The target audience of this field of study is composed of people who have been released from work and family responsibilities and decided to devote themselves and all of their spare time to creativity, as many of them may have dreamed all their lives. Their social activity is realized through immersion in their chosen fields of work. Accordingly, the determined set of disciplines and areas of gerontology includes drawing, working with clay, singing, dancing, and other various forms of creativity.

Students of subjects connected with computer literacy wish to stay abreast of the latest developments in technology. Therefore, they are happy to acquire skills in office software, graphic editors, as well as social networking, which should be taken into account in constructing the curriculum. The most enjoyable pastime for them is becoming immersed in a virtual reality, and the most common form of communication - virtual.

Finally, and most interesting trend in gerontological education, is professional development. The students of this subject are people who have reached retirement age, but do not want to stop their activity. However, for the continuation

of their successful careers they need to acquire knowledge about cutting-edge technologies and skills used in their field of work in addition to the already acquired academic knowledge and years of experience. It should be noted that this approach brings successful results. Sociologists note that 75% of the world's assets are controlled by the older generation.

Such people become active students at computer courses and courses with subjects related to their professional activities⁹⁴. Having mastered the PC skills, they make up a significant portion of students using distance technologies. Distance learning is more attractive for them, also because it enables them to get additional training "on the job" or in the comfort of your own home. That is, either in the workplace or at home, but without the time spent commuting to the educational establishment.

However, despite the significantly different values of people of retirement age who are studying in different fields of study at various institutions in the Russian Federation, many similarities were revealed among trainees in those places where gerontological education activities were implemented. First of all, all the studies indicate the initial focus of the majority of students on higher levels of education. More than half of them are regularly engaged in self-education as readers of scientific, popular and developing literature, books, and magazines.

Other features observed in all of the research is active life learning. Moreover, the vast majority of respondents at the age of fifty-five to sixty no longer consider themselves seniors. The studies of T.M. Kononygina (2008:248-273), present results of surveys of young people who started teaching at the third-age educational institutions. One of the things mentioned by young teachers was that their students have qualities such as wisdom, activity, cheerfulness, forbearance, creativity, sincerity, hard work and patriotism.

In this study, a comparison of non-learning students and people of retirement age has been conducted. The results show that almost 80% of students are willing to change all or part of their lives, while among non-learners, the figure is about 30%. Almost 60% of the students perceive the retirement age as a meaningful period of life, and among the non-learners this opinion is shared by about 20%. In contrast, only 7% of students believe the retirement age a period of rest, and among the non-learners, the figure is almost 55%. The data presented demonstrate that a person of retirement age taking part in the learning process has a much more proactive stance, rather than a non-learner.

This study also demonstrates that the value of education has higher significance for self-identity among students. Of these, nearly 85% say that it is because of the existing level of education that they occupy a worthy place in society. In the group of non-learning, the figure is about 65%. Among those studying in third-age educational institutions, nearly 65% believe that during the learning process in previous years they have learned to think creatively. Among non-learners, it's the importance of previous learning in the context of creative thinking is rated at only about 45%. Even more impressive is the data

⁹⁴ Computer literacy: Educational handbook for teachers, Yekaterinburg: ID "Ajour", 2011:84.

on the recognition of the role of education in the development of the ability to conduct social work. If the student environment, the figure is about 74%, in the group of non-learners it is only 43%. Almost 66% of students believe that education has helped them find meaning in life, while among the non-learners this view is held by only 50%. Among students, almost 90% believe that the full realization of an individual in the society is possible only when they continue training throughout their lifetime. In the group of non-learners this number is significantly lower, coming at only about 70%. Attitudes to education in groups of students and non-learners clearly show the number of people who believe that the learning would be a burden for them. Among students, the figure is below 5%, while among the non-learners it exceeds 10%. The data presented in the studies illustrate significant differences in approaches to education for persons involved in various aspects of gerontological education. Retired people continue their education because they recognize its high value to personal fulfilment. This is the main result of the study.

Similar data were obtained in the course of the study by GG Sorokin (2012:47-50). The objective of the study was to determine how gerontological education affected the respondents - those over 55 years old. The results show that 30% to 40% respondents (depending on the age group) point to gerontological education as a way to improve their skills, opportunities for further education, or retraining. The remainder (i.e. from 70% to 60% in different age categories) perceive gerontological education mainly as a form of leisure activity and opportunities for social adaptation. In conclusion, based on the findings, the author of the study concludes that a person perceiving gerontological education as a form of additional education belongs to the category of economically active citizens in retirement.

The years of research on various aspects of gerontological education in Russia were actively discussed at an inter-regional conference "For a healthy and active longevity: the role of non-governmental organizations in addressing the older generation"⁹⁵, held in Kursk on 5-6 June 2012. During the conference, a summary has been presented of the "Knowledge" Society's opening the People's University of the Third Age in the whole of Russia and in each region in particular (*Active Aging*, 2012). In each region, a network of such Russian Universities has its own specifics; for example, in many regions the Women's Union of Russia actively participates in the process.

The outcome of the Conference were recommendations for the further development of gerontological education in Russia, with which the Conference appealed to all participants in this process: the Federation Council and the State Duma, the Government and the Ministry of Education and Science, the regional authorities and civil society organizations - direct participants of the gerontological education processes.

Recommendations to the legislative and executive authorities concerned gerontological education official recognition as a form of education, as well as

⁹⁵ Recommendations of the inter-regional conference "For a healthy and active longevity: the role of non-governmental organizations in addressing the older generation" are described in "For a healthy and active longevity" Interregional Conference, Moscow 2012.

bringing the Russian gerontological education base in line with international standards. The essence of the recommendations in social organizations would acknowledge the effectiveness of the expanded network in Russia, the People's University of the Third Age, and contained specific measures for its further development.

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Elders in French Society

Introduction

The first French pension plan dates back to 1763 when Jean-Baptiste Colbert – the minister under King Louis XIV- established a pension fund for marines. But the pension insurance was not generalized or granted to all insured until 13 September 1946.

Between 1865 and 1980, France had the highest rate of aging population (transition from 7% to 14% of the population aged 65 and plus⁹⁶ in the world. According to INSEE⁹⁷, in 2012 approximately 17%⁹⁸ of French residents were 65 or older, which accounted for a significant fraction of the population. Moreover, this percentage will increase rapidly, possibly reaching 30% in 2050⁹⁹. This dramatic increase is due to lower birth rates and higher life expectancies.

Therefore, France faces a situation in which it needs to effectively manage or possibly even reform the existing national health insurance system (which is based on the principle of solidarity between generations and therefore funded by the working population) as well as to recognize the important position of the elders.

The aim of this communication is to present the socio-economic and sanitary situations of active seniors or seniors with deficiencies in French society and to present the current trends in care and activating of seniors.

Financial situation of the elderly

The French pension system is characterized by a wide variety of plans. Such as: a general plan that covers 71% of working population, a plan for civil service employees, a plan for self-employed individuals and other special plans.

⁹⁶ The threshold proposed by the United Nations and used in some publications of the INSEE.

⁹⁷ L'Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques (the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies).

⁹⁸ Bilan démographique 2012, http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/detail.asp?ref_id=bilan-demo.

⁹⁹ Projections de population pour la France métropolitaine à l'horizon 2050, Insee Première, 2006, n° 1089.

These plans are managed by 35 pension funds, to which all employees are obligated to subscribe. In France, since the latest reform, the legal age that allows an individual to access to their pension is between 60 and 62 years of age¹⁰⁰ (according to the year of birth of the insured). In general, the quality of life changes at that moment. The average pension amounts to €1400 – €1700 per month¹⁰¹ while the average salary reaches €2710¹⁰². Therefore, the standard of living decreases by 85 % for these who rely only on the savings of the pension fund¹⁰³. However, the pensioner does gain many fiscal and social advantages, such as lower taxes, discounts for cultural performances, public transport or swimming pools.

Health Insurance

French public healthcare is universal (*la Couverture maladie universelle, CMU*). *Securité sociale* refunds some parts of the medical treatment (for example 70% on the cost of doctor's appointments¹⁰⁴). To cover the difference between what the state pays and the cost of treatment, the French can take out a complementary insurance called *police complémentaire or mutuelle*. They are some special cases, in which the patient does not pay the differences, for example:

- When a salary or pension falls below a certain threshold (for example €7045.97 per year), the differences can be covered by CMU (*complémentaire santé gratuite*)
- When a patient suffers a long-term illness, *securité sociale* covers 100% of the cost of treatment.

Businesses often propose collective agreements for complementary insurance for its employees. However, once retired, if they choose to maintain complementary insurance, they are held personally accountable and must cover the cost of the subscription. This is optional but advisable.

The active elders and their place in the society

Elders in good physical and mental shape are able to benefit from range of activities. They have associations (like *les clubs Age d'Or* in Montpellier or *clubs du troisième âge*) in order to play cards, scrabble, pétanque, or to do crafts (sewing, knitting), paint and sculpt. These clubs also organize language courses, memory workshops, excursions or seniors dance evenings. Prices of the workshops

¹⁰⁰ Projet de loi portant réforme des retraites » from October 27th 2010.

¹⁰¹ Dossier d'information : les retraites en France, 2010, Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi, de la Formation professionnelle et du Dialogue social.

¹⁰² Salaires bruts mensuels moyens selon le secteur d'activité des salariés, http://www.insee.fr/themes/detail.asp?ref_id=asfrevenus#t1.

¹⁰³ Retraites, démographie, santé Vieillesse en France aujourd'hui et demain, sous la direction d'Eric Le Bourg, Vuibert, 2010:50.

¹⁰⁴ Price for a visit to a GP (*médecin traitant*) is €23. *Securité social* covers €15.10 and patient or mutuelle €6.90. €1 is a fixed participation paid always by the patient.

are affordable, or sometimes even free and interesting in comparison with the commercial offers.

Senior citizens go often to the theater, concerts¹⁰⁵ or to museums¹⁰⁶, as these facilities offer discounts for single tickets, monthly or annual passes. For example, the Senior Pass proposed by the city of Lille offers vast range of reductions in the areas of well-being, shopping, culture, leisure, restaurants, services and sports.

Traveling is also popular among elderly people. Many of whom have saved money to travel around the world upon retirement. There are some travel agencies like *Platinum Voyage* that specialize in organizing trips of up to 8 weeks for seniors.

While senior activities are readily available in big cities, they are still a rarity in many small towns and villages throughout the country.

Elders with deficiencies and daily living activities

Care services of the elderly

France offers a range of care services for the elderly. We can distinguish different categories of retirement homes providing services for people in good health (*maisons de retraite*), as well as the disabled (for example EHPAD¹⁰⁷), retirement villages or home care. In 2011, 518 673 elderly people over 75 lived in care homes and 531 927 in EHPAD¹⁰⁸.

Care homes differ according to the services they provide (though most of them do provide medical care), capacity, prices range (between €1200 and €2500 per month in the provinces and between €2780 and €3000 per month in Paris), and statute (public or private). The monthly fees paid by the resident or his/her family cover accommodation, food, maintenance and social and recreational activities. However, fees for nursing services are covered by the national health insurance¹⁰⁹. Some seniors with financial difficulties¹¹⁰ can receive financial help in order to pay for the “*maison de retraite*”. In general, the French are not enthusiastic about care homes because they are often perceived as hospices. In many cases, such as in the case of patients who have lost their independence; patients with Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s disease, it may be the best solution.

Some people prefer to live as long as possible in their home although they are sick, very old or disabled. In those particular cases, they can receive home care

¹⁰⁵ In 2000 : 24% of the population aged 65-74 and 11 % of the population aged 74 and plus went to a theater or concert within last 12 months according to INSEE.

¹⁰⁶ In 2000 : 39% of the population aged 65-74 and 28 % of the population aged 74 and plus went to a museum within last 12 months according to INSEE.

¹⁰⁷ Établissement d’Hébergement pour Personnes Agées Dépendantes.

¹⁰⁸ Accueil des personnes âgées en 2011:comparaisons régionales :http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=99&ref_id=t_1602R

¹⁰⁹ Sécurité Sociale.

¹¹⁰ 1,039,000 French aged 65 and plus lived in 2010 under the poverty threshold (INSEE).

in the following forms: housecleaning and shopping, catering¹¹¹ and everyday nursing and treatment.

Financial assistance for disabled people

A person can suffer from reduced physical or mental abilities as a result of a disease, accident, birth defects or age. In order to help people to cope with their dependence, France offers some financial allowances:

-APA¹¹² - a personal allowance granted based on a dependency ratio. In 2009, it amounted up to €1225 per month for people with a serious disability.

-PCH¹¹³ - it is designed to cover expenses connected with particular daily life needs for all disabled people under 60. It may help with home furnishing, specially trained animals for blind or disabled persons, wheelchairs, etc... The maximum amount of PCH reached €2600 in 2009.

¹¹¹ For example, in 2009 in Lille €1.50 was the price of a meal for a single person whose annual net revenue falls below €7781.29 for a year.

¹¹² Allocation Personnalisée pour l'Autonomie.

¹¹³ Prestation Compensatoire du Handicap.

The Role of Governmental and Non-governmental Organizations in the Creation of Conditions for Realization of Elderly People's Potential in Belarus

The elderly age is a full stage in human development at which an elderly person possesses some psychological resources: wisdom or life experience, un-realized spiritual cognitive and creative needs, the ability and willingness to change, the capacity for social contact and need for it. The creation of conditions for realization of elderly people's potential is an urgent problem and necessary task for social policy in any state. Belarus is no exception.

Currently, the population of Belarus is 9.4 million. 2.1 million are elderly citizens (over 60 years old). The increase in the number of elderly citizens has become a tendency in recent years. According to estimates, by 2015 the proportion of elderly people in the population will have reached 24%. Thus, today the aging of the society increases the urgency of the problem of social activity of the elderly people who may become a significant resource in the economy and culture of the country.

Today the problem of the elderly is considered from both the point of view of health and medicine and of social policy for elderly people, the realization of their rights. It is common knowledge that there are different models of social policy, in which the role of the state can be major or, conversely, minor. Then the functions of social policy realization are given to charitable, non-profit non-state organizations. Belarus is traditionally trying to follow a paternalistic model of social policy, in which the government takes a leading role in the implementation of social protection and security of the population. This corresponds to expectations of citizens, particularly the elderly, who have been used to such an order since the Soviet times.

In Belarus, the rights of elderly citizens are regulated by several laws. Among them are the following laws: "On Pensions", "On Veterans", "On Social Protection of Disabled People", etc. In accordance with the legislation, the main subject of the social policy implementation of the state is the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy which interacts with other governmental organizations.

The system of social protection of the elderly has two main areas: social security and social services. Social security is cash and other financial assistance provided by the State at the expense of the state budget (monthly pensions,

benefits for the purchase of medicines, benefits provided to citizens affected by the Chernobyl accident and the Great Patriotic War, benefits to the views of social services).

The central issue of social policy concerning elderly people is the pension increase. The average pension in Belarus today is about \$ 220 (February 2013). Pension increase in Belarus depends on the rate of wage growth. According to statistics, on January 1 2013 the total number of the pensioners receiving pension in the labor, employment and social protection departments reached 2,512,000 people. 23.4% of them continue to work. Women constitute the major part of working pensioners¹¹⁴.

In recent years the society began offering to increase the retirement age. This problem is urgent all over the world, including our own country, as the age of population is actively growing. There are different opinions on this issue. Proponents of raising the retirement age indicate that Belarus has one of the lowest retirement ages (60 years for men, 55 years for women.) Among the arguments "against" are low life expectancy, poor health by the age of 60 and the need to give way to the young. However, this issue has not been discussed yet at the state level.

In addition to the pension issue governmental organizations are also involved in social and psychological, social and domestic, medical and other kinds of aid.

The social services system, such as social protection of the elderly, represents a range of social services, expressed in a tangible form. The main institutions for implementing social protection of the population are local social service centers. These organizations work with a very wide range of citizens, including elderly people, especially those living alone and forming a particular social group. Social service centers are formed in every district of the country. More than 1.6 million people are registered in them in Belarus.

The centers use various methods in their activities. They provide different services to the elderly: household service, hourly care for those who have lost the ability to self-care, hairdressing and a mini-laundry. Social services at home are popular with elderly people most of all. For those who, for whatever reason, cannot live independently, special divisions are created inside local social service centers where the elderly can stay around the clock. One can live in them, receive household, sanitary services and, if necessary, medical assistance and food for up to six months. In rural areas, instead of local social services centers, social service units for the elderly are created.

Some of the social service agencies are homes for the disabled and the elderly designed for permanent residence of elderly citizens and people with disabilities who are unable to care for themselves independently.

Health care of elderly people is an important direction of the state activities. The country has a national geriatric center which deals with scientific and methodological issues of medical care for war veterans and the elderly. Medical care of elderly people is carried out by medical institutions without age restrictions.

¹¹⁴ Т. Максимова, Социальная поддержка пожилых людей в Республике Беларусь, в : <http://www.slideshare.net/Sektar/ss-17917056>

Every year the elderly are examined by a therapist, if necessary, medical specialists are involved. To improve health care of elderly patients geriatric service has been established. In 2012, 182 geriatric offices functioned in the health organizations of the republic. In order to prevent diseases and form a healthy lifestyle of the population, healthcare establishments offer a variety of "Health Schools" for elderly patients. According to the Ministry of Health, 200-300 thousand people are trained there every year ¹¹⁵.

One of the state activities is the implementation of governmental programs for social support of the population. Such programs are usually adopted for a 5 year period. They not only draw attention to the problems of the elderly but also make a significant contribution to the development of social services and the potential of elderly people. In 2011, the republic adopted a comprehensive program of social services for the years 2011-2015 (Щеткин, 2011:24). The document consists of three sub-programs: social support for veterans, individuals affected by the consequences of war, the elderly and the disabled; disability prevention and rehabilitation of people with disabilities; the development of social service agencies. Implementation of the program will create the conditions for sustainable improvement of life quality of veterans, individuals affected by the consequences of war, the elderly and the disabled, as well as improve the efficiency and availability of social protection state-based social guarantees and standards.

Currently, improving the quality of social services provided to elderly people remains an issue. Such factors as financing, qualification of employees at institutions providing services and other causes influence its level.

In addition to governmental agencies, non-state non-profit organizations also work with and for elderly people. They are created on the basis of social, religious, charitable organizations and individuals. These organizations help the elderly in different ways. As a rule, it is legal assistance, financial assistance, educational services and leisure activities.

One of the leading organizations is the republican public association "Belarusian Red Cross Society"¹¹⁶. This is a non-governmental association which has the status provided by the national legislation. The society on its own and in cooperation with state authorities implements measures to protect life and health of the population, to provide health and social care to people including the elderly. On the initiative of the society various informative events on active aging are traditionally held. Among them are the conference "The Role of Elderly People in Modern Society", the campaign "Care", the printed publication "Voices of the Elderly" and others.

Public organizations of veterans are also active at institutions and enterprises of the country. On their initiative the club for elderly people "Golden Age" is being created, the campaigns "Elderly to Elderly" are being organized, competitive and holiday programs, recreation parties, exhibitions of works made by the elderly are held. The main objectives of the veterans' organizations are striving to direct the activities of the elderly in a constructive way, to cause the public interest, to attract the attention of the authorities to elderly people's problems,

¹¹⁵ <http://www.1crp.by/component/content/article/96-main-news/1203-den-pozhilyh>

¹¹⁶ <http://www.prof-press.by/belarus/news/society/8441.html>

to involve the elderly into solving their problems, to form the feeling in elderly people that the society needs them.

The understanding that today it is not enough to provide elderly people with just material assistance or household help is confirmed by the activities of public and private organizations. It is important to treat an elderly person as an active member of the society and provide them with a variety of opportunities for self-realization.

An effective form of work with elderly people has become the work of Universities of the Third Age, which operate in a number of cities in Belarus (Тесля, 2011:39). The activities of such universities are organized in different ways. They are involved in the organization of recreation and various training courses for the elderly. They provide pensioners with the opportunity to learn an entirely new field of knowledge. However, the number of such universities is not large. Both public and private organizations have potential in their creation.

A non-governmental organization which is a representative of the German Association of Public Universities (Minsk) is implementing an interesting project aiming at the organization of work with elderly people in Belarus. The project is called "TOLLAS - For Active Society at all Ages" and it is carried out in cooperation with local governmental and non-governmental partners¹¹⁷. The objectives of the project are to provide an opportunity for elderly people to play an active role in their communities, to strengthen the capacity of state and non-state institutions in the presentation of educational services for elderly people based on their needs and interests. Two resource centers have been created, a variety of educational programs have been organized within them: "Computer and the Internet for the Elderly", "School of Fascinating Needlework", "School of Economics and Law", etc. The project includes educational events for professionals working with elderly people (courses, meetings, etc.).

The analysis shows that governmental and non-governmental organizations at different levels (national and local) are expanding activities in order to create conditions for the realization of elderly people's potential and create conditions for the full life of the citizens of this age. The activities of public organizations mainly cover the basic needs of the elderly (pensions and benefits, social services for the neediest citizens). The non-state sector is also growing but it is worth mentioning that most organizations are engaged in the problems of veterans and the disabled rather than the elderly. Non-governmental organizations often just help state organizations. Social organizations of pensioners, veterans and others provide the elderly with legal assistance, help to understand the law, to explain their rights and responsibilities. In addition to this, various educational programs, as well as organized leisure, are carried out on the basis of public organizations.

Social activities of elderly people depend on the subjective (personal qualities of an individual, the level of education, motivation and life position) and objective (societal attitudes towards elderly people, coordinating the interests and actions of various social institutions) factors. There must be active

¹¹⁷ http://dvv-international.by/ru/projects/our_projects/tollas

trilateral cooperation in the organization of retired life, their full development and well-being from the governmental and non-governmental organizations and pensioners themselves. With the help of non-governmental organizations, pensioners should bring their needs and desires to the state, and governmental organizations should promote interests of elderly people at the state level. The older generation of Belarus is an important resource for economic development of the country. A lot of elderly people have a high level of education and skills, extensive experience. The effective use of elderly people's potential can provide a base for further development of the society as in this way the economy will gain additional resources, and the elderly will get the possibility of self-realization.

Peculiarities of Teacher's Post-Professional Reflection

Introduction: Topicality and problem statement

Today it is necessary to state that the problem of organization of the social and psychological conditions of personality development in aged persons is extremely important. Their decision determines not only the activity of elderly persons and their position in the society, but also brings out the issue in a broader context - the creation of opportunities for the psychological adaptation of elderly people to the new social situation and changing attitudes in the society. With life expectancy increasing in developed countries, a social order has appeared for the implementation of labor needs, professional and life experience of elderly people, which explains the interest in gerontology studying post-professional development in aging persons. In Ukraine, the relevance of this research attracts interest of high-level scholars and practitioners in the field of geragogics, support for people during their post-professional activities for their further development, updating of acquired professional experience, building postprofessional life strategies.

In connection with the above mentioned and a number of studies on the structure of reflective properties of the elderly, we determine their importance in the post professional period. Thus, being the most important part of human being, reflection is present in all human activities, but in a number of professions (teacher, psychologist, doctor), it is a condition of efficient activity, turning into a pivotal category, professionally meaningful. In the structure of teachers' and psychologists' competence the developed reflexivity is recognized as a highly significant professional quality.

We determined a scientific interest to the value of the pedagogical reflection functioning, connected with the content peculiarities of the indicated activity, teaching experience during the period of the specialist retirement. Old age as a stage of gerontogenesis, according to the international standards of classification, begins at the age of 50-55 for women, at the age of 60 for men. This stage in the personality's mental development is associated with the time of retirement. Elderly age is considered as a crisis period, which is associated with adaptation to new social conditions, as a stage of transition from adulthood to old age.

We share the experts' opinion that the adaptive capacity of the retirement age teacher, which continues to work in an educational institution or actively

participates in public life, is reduced due to age-related changes. But at the same time, active involvement in professional activities plays a stabilizing role. Today, old age is associated with the mediation and transferring of experience to younger generations. And the value of reflection is vital because it provides the basic functions of consciousness: excluding of the man himself from the environment and contrasting himself to it as a subject to an object; generalized and targeted reflection of the external world; recognition, understanding, that is, binding of the previous experience with the new received information; preliminary thought-building of actions and forecast of their consequences; control and management of own behavior, the ability to be aware of what is going on.

The topic pointed out under the study determined the basic goal of the theoretical analysis of peculiarities of teachers' reflection functioning in post-professional period of their life.

Analysis of the latest research and presentation of the core material

In the last decade, scientific concepts of age-related changes of personality in old age began to occupy an important place in the study of an adult's and an elderly people's features. These scientific concepts are developed by domestic (L.I.Antsyferova, M.D.Aleksandrova, I.S.Kon, A.A.Kozlov, O.V.Krasnova, A.G.Lidere, N.F.Shakhmatov and others) and foreign (P.B.Baltes, H.Craig, B.Neugarten, K.V.Chailly, etc.) psychologists, the theory of gerontogenesis (M.D.Aleksandrova, B.G.Ananiev), the theory of life's journey (K.A.Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, L.I.Antsyferova), approaches to the problem of personal identity (K.A.Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, L.I.Bozhovich, M.R.Ginsburg, E.I.Golovakha, N.S.Pryazhnikov, V.I.Slobodchikov, S.Rubinstein and others), as well as approaches to andro- and geragogics (B.M.Bim-Bad, S.G.Vershlovskiy, S.I.Zmeev, E.A.Koroliova, T.M.Kononygina, P.Dzhazvis, M.S.Nowles, etc.). The above-mentioned theoretical positions identify the emergence of new scientific ideas about the possibilities of personal development in later life. Today, there are more frequent references to an old age as the age of development (M.D.Aleksandrova, L.I.Antsyferova, T.V.Karsaevskaya, O.V.Krasnova; A.L.Liders; V.I.Slobodchikov, E.I.Isaev, etc.). These researchers of the late ontogenesis note that the aging process is not gradual fading of the human body's functions, but consists of a combination of periods: acquisition and decline. Since it is known that in old age, along with the heterochronical development of involitional processes (weakening of the ability to withstand physical and mental stress, weakening of the physiological systems of the body functioning) the activation of subjective activity takes place (Александрова, 2000).

"The influence of individual's life and the degree of his activity on the course of ontogenetic evolution in the aging period is much greater than in the early years", - said Boris Ananiev (Ананьев, 1980:121).

M.D.Aleksandrova (Александрова, 2000) provides an overview of works by national and foreign scholars on the impact of education, general and special

abilities, interests and occupations on the preservation and development of the various aspects of intellect in the period of gerontogenesis.

An important factor in a person's viability is not only the level of education, but also occupation. People of retirement age are characterized by high safety of those functions that were an essential mental factor of their professional activity. Thus, studies of foreign psychologists (Harvard Medical School) show that in many professions workers are better at performing professional duties that require quickness of actions and experience. Thus, people's peculiarities in post-professional period of life are care about future generations and the responsibility for young people. In old age it is seen as a fundamental complement to the image and the meaning of life.

The development of the activity subject and the ability to work is carried out in connection with the personal characteristics. B.G. Ananiev (Ананьев, 1980: 204-206) emphasized close connection between the person and the activity subject, keeping in mind that the role of the individual, their social status and involvement in public relations, awareness of the social importance of the performed activities as an internal factor in the preservation of ability to work and structures of the subject of different types of activity strengthen in the late ontogeny.

Thus, realizing that the characteristic feature of the late period of life is to enhance the action of the laws of developmental heterochrony, irregularities and stadiality, scientists argue about the changes, new formations of the progressive nature aiming at overcoming of the destructive effects of gerontogenesis. Active old age of an elderly person is stipulated by their development as a socially active person, as the subject of creativity and bright personality. And here the high level of self-organization, conscious self-regulation of their way of life and livelihood plays a huge role.

Important processes of self-organization and self-regulation are significant in elderly person's post professional adaptation to a new social role that is determined by the period of gerontogenesis (primarily related to the type of work: non-working retiree, working pensioner – by qualification or not).

In the course of a monographic study, L.N. Kuleshova identified the regulatory role of reflective properties of an elderly individual and their close connection with the purposes and activities of life, values, and attitudes (Кулешова, 1999). Reflective properties perform functions of self-regulation and self-development, thus contributing to the preservation of capacity for work in later ontogeny.

In order to determine some characteristics of a teacher's post-professional reflection, it seems important to point out a few things that accentuate the role of reflection in professional activities and teaching in particular. Firstly, reflection is required for the development of professional activity. Secondly, it is based on the control and management of the assimilation process. Thirdly, reflection is necessary when changing the conditions of professional and educational activities. Fourthly, it is one of the basic mechanisms of the activity development itself.

S.A. Druzhilov (Дружиллов, 2005) considers professional reflection as a component of professional competence. According to his definition, reflective

component manifests in the ability to consciously control the results of own activities and the level of self-development, personal achievements, provides a tendency to introspection, as well as a regulator of the search of personal meanings in dealing with people, self governing and incentive for self-discovery, professional growth, skills improving. From the researchers' point of view it is self-discovery, awareness of own personality, professional abilities and qualities that can bring a specialist to the effective implementation of professional activity. It is emphasized that a specialist with a high level of professional reflection differs from a specialist with a low level of desire for self-development, positive motivation aims and expectations, ability to control own emotional states and other means of meaning making (an actualised model of a professional, set on the development of professionally important qualities, career planning, etc.).

A more precise definition of professional reflection is given by E.E.Rukavishnikova. She considers professional reflection as a psychological mechanism of professional self-improvement and self-actualization, manifested in the expert's ability to have an analytical attitude towards himself and his professional activities.

Educational activity is inherently reflexive. Thus, A.A.Bizyaeva (Бизяева, 1993) understands a pedagogical reflection as a complex psychological phenomenon, which manifests itself in the teacher's ability to enter the active personal research position in relation to his activities and to himself as its subject with the aim of critical analysis, reflection and evaluation of its effectiveness for the child's development. A reflective teacher, is an educator who thinks, analyses, and explores their experience.

Thus, we consider professional pedagogical reflection to be the teacher's awareness of themselves as a subject of teaching activities and teaching situation; the values they are guided by, adequacy evaluation of their own pedagogical actions and behaviors in professionally relevant situations.

At the same time, we agree with the position that pedagogical reflection is not just the teacher's knowledge or understanding of themselves, but also finding out how others know and understand their personality traits, emotional reactions and cognitive representations; and this is a process of double mirror mutual reflection of the subjects, the content of which is awareness of teaching activities, re-creation of each other's features (Вульф, 1995).

In the teacher's professional work, intellectual, cooperative, social, perceptual, personal and communicative forms of reflection should be presented at all stages of professional development. Reflexive skills characterized by generality having the property of transfer, facilitating the development of other skills, provide self-regulation of activity and interaction, self-improvement and self-development of the teacher's personality.

Signs of advanced professional reflection are consciousness of his personality nature; awareness of meanings and values of his teaching activities; positive acceptance of the past and focus in the present and the future, the ability to independently change the unfavorable course of events, to find optimal ways out of difficult teaching situations; influence others actively and positively. We can confidently state that today the formation of reflective thinking culture of

pedagogical process subjects becomes one of the important trends of modern education.

A number of experimental studies (Кулешова, 1999) indicate some of the features of postprofessional adaptation of the retirement age teachers, orientation of the reflective mechanism of their professional activities. No proof was found to confirm the hypothesis of elderly teachers' age-related decline of adaptation in professional work. The data obtained show a significant transformation in the personality structure in old age and increase of the individual's reflective characteristics in this transformation. Every teacher, being in retirement, can be "a professional in the past," or be a welcome consultant, expert, mentor for young colleagues at the stage of post-professional activity. This level may allow the teacher in the elderly age to get new facets of professionalism, consisting of care and spiritual enrichment of other subjects of education. It has been found that the retirement age teacher-tutor, continuing his educational activities, has higher satisfaction of the professional environment (relations with the teaching staff, the management of educational institutions, children, colleagues, attitude towards the establishment and to himself as a professional) than younger teachers. According to the study, adaptive behavior skills, formed as a result of professional experience, play a big role in it. In general, adaptivity to the profession of the retirement age teacher, continuing to work, can be preserved with the help of the prevalence of direction "for work" over the direction "for himself" and "for interaction", the dominance of intrinsic motivation and positive extrinsic motivation over external negative motivation, the need to achieve success, high self-esteem of the ability to self-control, openness to the world, gaining goals, as well as psychological flexibility. Stabilizing factors are active involvement in the creative professional activities and personal factors.

Researchers determined that there is no dependence of the teacher's choice to continue or suspend professional activity on the state of their health, financial security. In this situation, we consider here such main regulators of activities as self-concept and motivational factors.

At the same time, it is found that the retirement age teacher's high self-esteem of his creativity, the ability to communicate constructively, stress resistance, "workaholism" are positively associated with the professional environment satisfaction and at the same time enhance physiological manifestations of maladjustment due to the existence of high physical, emotional, information loads, continuous changes in the professional environment. These properties support business and communicative activity, but at the same time neuro-psychological costs increase as well. Restoring this balance requires activation of the adaptation process.

Reflection plays a crucial role in the overcoming of the teacher's professional difficulties. Mastering its tool is a professional challenge for both a young teacher and an experienced one.

In our opinion, the most important and a priority thing within the framework of this problem solution is the need for possession of the pedagogical analysis skills. Their active development and formation are provided in the program of psychological counseling, designed for retirement age teachers who continue

to work in an educational institution. Thus, the improving of their adaptability to the profession can be considered a result of pedagogical analysis of motivational factors, namely, the need to achieve success, intrinsic motivation, external positive motivation, focus on the business. The change in the self-esteem of "anti-crisis factors" is topical. This program can be recommended for remedial work with retirement age teachers, educators who continue to work, as well as teachers of other age groups. After necessary clarifications, the program can be used for psychological assistance to working pensioners in other professional fields.

Reflection is a quality which can be developed, and it has the most intensive development in a specially organized innovation activity. One of the conditions of its development is the use of effective psychological technologies, and, above all, personality-oriented and reflective training. A reflective diary, organizational-leadership games can be used as a technique of development of pedagogical reflection. The questions of the pedagogical dialogue and discussion as a mechanism of the formation process and the role of reflection in these processes are of practical interest.

In general, the directions of the reflexivity formation can become reflection strategies expanding in the process of solving non-standard pedagogical tasks that require problem-solving with a high degree of conflict, training of pedagogical situations analysis, as well as the inclusion of a variety of psychological methods of complex formation of professional identity.

Conclusions

The analysis of scientific data strongly suggests that the process of personal development in the period of old age does not stop. Values of social activity, community service, creative and professional work, the desire for self-realization and transfer of personal potential, the semantic value of life acquisitions in individual experiences of young colleagues, meeting the needs in communication play an important role. These trends are observed in the professional activity of a specialist in the pedagogical sphere of education.

We consider studying gerontological and psychological features in the pedagogical management, development of comprehensive programs for psychological and educational assistance to working pensioners in education, which are promising scientific and applied developments of the topic covered by the study.

Family and Growing Old from the Aspect of Illness, Dying and Death

Introduction

It has been shown in the existing characteristics of the ageing process that health deterioration connected with age has always been its unavoidable part. What comes out of it are some predictable consequences, such as various limitations, narrowing of cognitive horizons, infirmity, pain, suffering, death. In the 20th century old age was associated with retiring, dementia, illnesses and death. Elderly people were often presented as people needing help in their everyday life, less capable to cope with inevitable consequences of getting old. A stereotype of an elderly person preoccupied with their own fears concerning the old age and growing old, and actually with fears connected with numerous, traumatic occurrences in human being's life such as illness, dying and death, was prevailing.

Difficult events in human's life are discussed in relation to the old age, emphasising however that they do take place, are present in human life outside time and age, they can and do afflict people regardless of age, sex and other social indicators.

No one has really and totally come to terms with the inevitability of growing old and its consequence – death. Everybody wants to live long and happily, but in order to live long one has to grow old and die in the end. Death appears as a phenomenon integrated with life whose unavoidability is reminded by years passing by and events such as illness, suffering and loneliness.

Subsequent phases of individual and family life bring further experiences and drive away the thought about death, but it keeps us company keeping up with us bravely. We meet her even when we extend wishes when people say "may you live long and happily". In this way they express a belief that from the point of life and its sense it is important to perceive it as accomplished values. Health, which allows life hoping that heading for the end will not mean suffering and happiness that strengthens life with good and beauty.

The majority of our actions in the period of old age confirm our attachment to a model of the world which could be named a "world of metaphysical order". The world of the metaphysical order is reality shaped by objective (in Christianity

given from God) physical laws. "These laws in the model discussed are identical with moral and aesthetic laws, together constituting the unity of Truth, Good and Beauty. Trine laws gave the reality an equally trine physical order, being at the same time a moral and aesthetic order" (Gałuszko, Szewczyk, 1996:17). The laws of trine order create something like a plan of structural-functional world in which everything has its place and exactly defined functions connected with it. Birth, joy and happiness have their meaning and value in it. So do illness, suffering, pain. And so does death. In the world of metaphysical order death, pain and suffering are settled it. Each person, reflecting upon life and death, refers to knowledge and self-knowledge collected through all one's life.

Our civilization is a civilization of progress which has brought about an extensive development of medicine and biological disciplines more or less connected with medicine. Reports about newer and newer achievements of medicine bring a promise of uprooting illnesses and at the same time an extremely clear, although indirect, promise of fighting death. It is shown for example by a fact that in the past illnesses which used to be treated as fatal, are chronic today. On the other hand, the same power of biomedicine scares us since we are aware of the inevitability of our death. We are aware of the fact that, according to the fundamental rule of biology, each cell of a living organism has to, after a certain period of time, degenerate and die (Wiśniewska-Roszkowska, 1985). Biomedicine gives us hope that this phenomenon can be put off, but at the same time it increases fear, dread of dying and its suffering. We are afraid that the progressing medicalization of life would leave us alone with our death or that our own death would become deprived of dignity. We are afraid that "our" death may become "a" death, that it would take a form of a socially acceptable treatment. Merging death into a natural cycle of everyday occurrences cannot efficiently uproot the willingness of its existential understanding. We want to understand our death so that it is not only a biological sense of degeneration. We want our death to have its sense and its quality, and not to be an uncovering of our loneliness.

In these and especially in these moments of life, what is most important to every person and not only a senior citizen, is family. It is them where we look for support but also confirmation of the sense of our suffering, a way of accustoming the ensuing situation. In the end, we quite often get a piece of information that the illness and suffering are a ground for death and mourning, time of sadness and loneliness but also time for ordering and organizing life from scratch, life "after", building future in the shade of the past.

Old age is treated in this address as a biological, individual and social phenomenon which has its deep objective and subjective dimension and can be considered in relation to time, time as life, acting of experience. Even more so, since progress taking part in the area of medicine and geriatric care not only prolongs life but also help elderly patients to keep their functionality also in a chronic disease. What is more, in the determination to describe human growing old we should concentrate on the human ability to act, overcome and reach and not on a passive avoidance of life problems and fear of pain, disability, illness, death.

Illness is the most personal, individual and intimate experience, we can talk about stages of experiencing illness in relation to time. Illness, in relation to family functioning, is a family occurrence which changes the functioning of an ill person and all other members of the family community. The illness changes an ill person's life on many planes, excluding from some, significantly reducing on others but it also changes the life of other family members, reorganizing it, destroying established aims, it reclassifies priorities. *"When somebody is ill in the family, then it is actually the whole family that is ill"*.

Old age is the last stage in human life, and maybe it is why it fills with sadness, evokes so many bad and often untrue and unjustified fears since it inevitably leads to death. Most often this fear accompanies people who are still young, most probably elderly people more and more often come to terms with the inevitability of their own death. It seems that they are not afraid of death but of dying, suffering, losing self-reliance, independence, driving force in their own life. But both of them (old age and death) are inscribed into each human life. Death has always evoked very strong emotional reactions; one of them is severe grief which is accompanied by serious mental disorders such as depression and fear. Death – loss, is one of the most difficult emotional challenges in face of which human being grows older. The issue of losing a family member has been described in many ways, there are mainly two terms encompassing its emotional consequences and social phenomenology, namely grief and mourning. Grief is a psychological or internal experience of a loss whereas mourning refers more to the process of coping with it. Looking for a social and family support (Hill, 2005:275).

It is the family that appears as the fundamental and most important plane of social and emotional functioning of an elderly person plunged in mourning or facing a situation of illness and fear of death connected with it. The family is both an active environment, namely such which undergoes transformations and changes both under the influence of time passing by but also various family occurrences conditioned culturally and traditionally. Senior citizens' family life is a dynamic process, they come through various phases of development, including the process of dying and death, but also mourning. In accordance with the model of positive growing old, family has been deemed as one of the protective factors in grief and mourning.

Passage of time – course of life – old age

"Old age is one of the notions which, although obvious to everyone in its common meaning, are difficult, and even impossible to define scientifically. A classic example of such notion, difficult to define scientifically, is life, which cannot be defined by anyone without reservations. Old age is a final phase of life, after it there is only death, as a consequence lack of definition of life shatters the possibility to define one of its periods in an unquestionable way". (Kępiński, 1978:318)

According to A. Comfort growing old is "based on passing, using, increasing or running away of something different than time". (Comfort, 1968:21)

J. Piotrowski, an authority of Polish social gerontology, has defined old age as a cultural phenomenon developed on a biological ground connected with decreasing of power. There is no objective or natural threshold of old age. Connecting old age with chronological age of being 70, 80 years old is purely conventional and has become popular with social security (Piotrowski, 1973:39).

Chronological age is years lived by and phases from birth to old age and death connected with it. Time and age indicated by it are permanently connected with life phases. We have a chronological, biological, institutional, model, certificate, etc. age. All of them exist objectively. Apart of them there are also times experienced subjectively: time of love, separation, illness, suffering. Time and age indicated by it is inherent in each phase of life which, overlapping, tie in a buckle called "life" presence, past and future. Life is a continuum. "Presence, past and future are not separate, they are a continuity which carries us. That is why growing old and old age cannot be separated from childhood, young age, maturity. Life continuum leads from birth to death." (Reboul, Guillaumin, 1982:21)

What is especially strongly inscribed into growing old and old age is its objective and subjective dimension. The objective dimension is a certain group of features which, by occurring together, is treated as a symptom of old age. Among them the first ones to be mentioned are externally observable signs of growing old such as: grey hair, wrinkles, senile blotches, a stooped figure or the need to use prostheses, and then right after them: weakening of biological strength connected with changes in the organism, physical appearance features, retirement, birth of grandchildren, spouse's death. Apart from this dimension there is also a subjective dimension connected with the fact that our old age, with all its consequences, cannot be lived by somebody else. There is no some old age, there is somebody's old age, it belongs to somebody. That is why the way it is experienced depends on many individually developed features as well as on social-economic context in which an entity experiencing his/her old age is in. A subjective dimension of old age is connected with time and age, and to be more precise with being in time "with no age". "Age, Andre Gorz writes, as a number of years and as an idea of maturity, growing old, life and death, without which counting the years would make no sense comes to us from other people since we have no time for ourselves. We have it in comparison with other people, with a length of life achieved in a given period, in relation to the status which the society creates on the basis of this expected span of life". There is a clear dependency between the age of an individual and sense of time. Experienced facts prolong the lasting of time. Time passes by differently when we are happy and totally differently when we experience loneliness or suffering. Therefore, we experience old age differently when it is relatively healthy and sunny and differently when it is burdened with illness and suffering. Because old age, although it is not an illness, definitely favours illnesses. A subjective dimension of old age is also experiencing and feeling the passing of time. The time of happiness, fun and relax passes by much faster in the subjective feeling, time for

waiting for an event, arrival of a long-expected person, diagnosis becomes significantly longer. It seems however, that the time of suffering and illness passes by the slowest, as if it was an intensification of experienced time.

Illness

Illness is a condition which can appear in each phase of life, but there are two especially predisposed to its taking place – childhood and old age.

Illness is a deviation from a proper state, it is an organism's response to acting of a harmful stimulus, a pathogenic factor. These factors can be much varied and disorders, as well as immune defence reactions in the system, can be varied accordingly. Illnesses are divided due to various criteria such as the time of their duration (acute – lasting for a few days, sub-acute – lasting for a few months and chronic – lasting for years), another division are mental and somatic illnesses. I am not going to refer in details to factors, or their kinds, triggering illnesses, since I believe that everyone can define them, even if only in the narrow sense. I am going to deal with the illness as an element of bodily, and most of all mental condition of the human being.

Illness is inscribed into everyone's life. It upsets spiritual and mental order in the human being. It constitutes a certain element of human bodily condition, such as growing old and death. The illness triggers various attitudes towards it. W. Szewczyk mentions five ways of perceiving the illness: Challenge, namely difficulty which needs to be solved; an enemy which needs to be conquered; a punishment which needs to be faced; an escape from everyday problems and responsibility; finally a value that develops and deepens internally.

Illness, as an integral part of human life extends to its bodily, mental and spiritual plane. According to K. Osińska (1980), experiencing it consciously gives much more value than health itself can give. According to the author, the illness may be taken as a gift, a phenomenon, a situation, suffering, fact, chance and sign of grace.

M. Jarosz (2004:5) shows that for the human being illness may be an obstacle, a loss, a relief, a benefit or a value. Treated as an obstacle it combines two notions: an enemy and a challenge. By taking illness as a challenge human being takes a fight, opposes the disease and shows a strong motivation to overcome a weakness. Treating the illness as an enemy shapes in the ill person readiness to give up. Perceiving it as the loss leads to a reaction which is characterized by a gradual withdrawal and passive giving up to the course of events.

An ill person goes through three stages connected with the existence of the illness: a stage of surprise, a stage of looking for balance and a stage of freeing oneself of illness dependence. The surprise stage is characterized for example by disappointment, anxiety and being ashamed. It is connected with waiting for a diagnosis, treatment and prognosis. The condition to enter the second stage is change of the elements of surprise to elements developing and uniting the sick internally.

The stage of looking for balance can have positive and negative features as well as neutral ones. The positive attitude is characterised by reflecting upon the sense and aim of life, the system of values and realization of social roles. It leads to an internal harmony of an ill person. S/he obtains an ability to be ill which is reflected in a rational attitude towards care and help to others in development, growing and personality maturing. The negative attitude is based on a passive acceptance of the illness, isolating from other people and their problems as well as realization of one's own selfish aims. The neutral attitude is shown in looking for undefined aims and values. People aiming to achieve a balance in a negative or neutral way do not see the possibility of personality development and treat the illness as a life defeat.

The stage of freeing oneself from the illness dependence is realized by people who have gone through the stage of positive looking for balance. They free themselves from the influence of illness by means of thinking, acting and feeling. They consciously aim at developing their personality. They lead an active and creative life and consequently strive for the realization of their life goals. Ill people, who have obtained the ability to be ill, are characterised by disinterestedness, wisdom and a growing maturity (Ibid.).

Hope, which is a belief that the desired aims are possible to achieve, regardless the scantiness of their achievement likelihood, is most important. This means that "I can get well despite the seriousness of my illness". It is important to believe that we have what we need around us, although this may not always be what we want. We need to find a belief thanks to which we can cooperate with the doctor and together change the quality of our life, and we will then overcome the illness alongside (Krzemionka – Brózda, 2005).

Illness is connected with experiencing further stages leading to it – an illness of accustoming. Still, this certain accustoming of the illness may take various ways from *in plus* to *in minus*. It can give it creative development and as a result, an internally strongly integrated personality, ready to cope with the illness or accepting it with dignity. But it can also lead towards apathy, isolation, rejection.

Experiencing the illness and the way of taking it depends very much on the emotional state of the ill person (s/he often makes a so-called cognitive work-out of the illness which is basis for adopting to it), from personal features as well as mental or psychological disorders suffered in previous stages of life, age of the ill and their family situation, picture of their own disease and possibility of its treatment.

Illness is a situation in which three sides, more or less consciously, are involved: a doctor, an ill person and his/her family. Each of them has a different view of the illness created on the basis of very different sources, a various way of reacting to events connected with it. A common ground for acting is helping to create an understanding of the illness, accepting it and making it a value.

Among the most frequent sad feelings which can be observed among the fatally ill are depression, anger and fear. Fear, which can have various reasons, is the strongest of them. Most often it is fear of worsening health condition, and most of all it is the fear of dying, the fear of death. In the last stage of an illness, which is inevitably heading towards the end it is the fear of dying in pain and

alone. It is not death that we are afraid of but suffering and dying. Suffering, inextricably connected with life, is one of the most unbearable life experiences. Although pain can be somehow eased than suffering shows human helplessness. It is a border situation not only for the very person suffering but also for the environment. Physical suffering is most visible, but apart from it there is also a different suffering, a moral-spiritual one. Most often it is caused by death of people near to us.

Human being experiences suffering, it is an indispensable element of human life, it is a common phenomenon, accompanying the human being on each stage of development. There may be many sources and reasons of suffering, it includes to some extent external factors and to some – internal ones. External factors constitute an inherent element of human fate – already the very birth is marked with a state of suffering. An unintended reason of suffering can be a common phenomenon of an illness. Old age and all its symptoms are a factor inextricably connected with human suffering. Suffering is a reality experienced individually by a human being. Only a human being, regardless where s/he lives and suffers, asks the question about the sense and reason of such a state.

A special state which is caused by suffering is fear of fate that awaits the human being after the death. This fear comes out of biological drive to keep the species and human life. This drive is aimed at development and protecting one's own life and the perspective of going by, death causes in people fear and suffering.

Death

Death is an inevitable phenomenon for the human being, but at the same time it constitutes a great unknown. For some it will be passing to "another world", to others annihilation – the end of everything. No one of the living will ever fathom this phenomenon, therefore there is fear of the death. The death fear has always accompanied human being, just as the death itself. It could seem however, that a modern person's approach to the phenomenon of death has changed. Former cultures were more resistant to dying. They created a model of "accustomed death" – people were dying at homes, being surrounded by their closest ones, in terms with the fact. In traditional culture death was understood as a natural passing to the Maker. A modern model brings unrest, dread, fear and drives away the awareness of death. Today, more and more people want to die as fast as possible, with no pain, so as not to feel anything – best with anaesthesia, in sleep. Also the present issue of euthanasia is connected with this attitude. Euthanasia is just death on request – fast, smooth, with no pain and suffering.

Each person is aware of their own death, its irreversibility and mystery. Death has definitely its sense and quality which is expressed in the change of attitudes, redefinition of life aims of people in mourning. No one can ever tell what happens after death, but this mostly depends on the adopted philosophical and religious doctrine, but there are some individual behaviour which can

be called stages of going through the mourning as a personal experience and not a social fact.

Death has always evoked a very strong emotional reaction whose strength, power and kind depends on such factors as: the way of dying (an accident, a sudden death, death preceded by an illness), level of kinship, kind and frequency of contacts with the deceased person, age of the deceased.

The process of dying and death has been described in the literature of the subject in many ways, opinions quoted above only confirm the fact that the discussion whether it is better to define it as a state, a series of stages or a trajectory is still going on. Nevertheless, all theories of death are based on the concept that it is a process taking part according to some predictable patterns and including temporary emotional and mental states, among which pain, fear, stress, denial are dominating. Two theories of death can be deemed as the most popular. The first of them, represented for example by Kubler – Ross, describes dying and death as subsequent stages overcome by the human beings on the way to death. Dying is characterised as a process including a series of non-continuing stages that a person has to pass, coming closer to the end of life. The character of particular stages as well as the fact whether the human being overcomes them one by one or can go back to earlier stages is difficult to determine. Still, in order to keep a high quality of life in the process of dying, all of them need to be overcome.

The second one characterizes death and the process of dying as a mental state with anticipatory attitude towards the event suggesting at the same time that human mental state changes with time, when life comes to an end.

On the basis of the first theory and according to Kubler-Ross (1998) the process of dying consists of 5 stages: denial, anger, negotiation, depression and acceptance.

1. Denial is an early phase of dying, it means inability to accept the fact of dying. It is an important stage since when the person finally acknowledges the fact of their own death, s/he can come through another stages fully consciously.
2. Anger is a result of becoming aware of the coming end. It can be of an oriented or non-oriented character. The first one is most often aimed at the members of the family or the dying person him/herself. A non-oriented anger is a situation in which a person becomes aware that nothing can stop the process of dying.
3. Negotiations are an expression of a hidden hope of recovery.
4. Experiencing depression can include sadness, the feeling of helplessness and other negative affective symptoms.
5. Accepting the approaching death and a retrospective analysis of one's own life as an attempt to order things and forget past harm.

A more modern approach to the stage-model of dying has been proposed by Buckman who lists only three stages of dying: the initial phase, chronic and end one (Hill, 2005:279 – 293).

Referring to one's own experience in reacting to a close person's death we can distinguish certain stages: *stage of shock and being lost in reality* (suddenly, a so-far

ordered world is shattered into many pieces which make no logical or existential order, and even the need of being). *Stage of facing the death*, is time of the need to physically part with the body of the dead, preparing and experiencing the funeral, facing up to the need to create a possibility and conditions to pay the last tribute to the deceased by family members and acquaintances. Most often it is a time of rebellion, disagreement, loneliness, tiredness and sense of injustice. It is a time of pain in which we become aware of the necessity to part with customs, habits, style of life from "before". A difficult moment of becoming aware that it will never be like it used to be before. Another stage is a *stage of forgiving oneself* for not having said everything we should have said the deceased person that we have not loved enough, that we have not managed to do so many things. This is a true period of parting with the deceased and finally a *stage of working out an own, individual and autonomous way of life and functioning without the deceased person*. We redefine our own emotions and feelings accompanying a new life situation, this is a time of active or destructive looking for a new order in life and organizing everyday life.

The second theoretical approach to the process of dying connects it with certain mental states or approaches. Its most popular presentation is the theory of "fear of dying" emphasizing an anticipatory and affective component of death and dying which is expressed in a patient's emotional state (dread, fear, terror, feeling of danger). A paradigm of fear of death suggests that a dying person uses certain social and psychological mechanisms in order to cope with anticipatory fear.

Mourning is inextricably connected with death. Elements of mourning are various experiences and behaviours. Experiencing of mourning is accompanied by sadness, fear, feeling of guilt, loneliness. Majority of psychologists believe that mourning has the following phases:

- Initial phase (3 – 4 weeks). Mourners react to a close person's death with shock and disbelief in real death. The state takes place after a few days and its place is taken by generalised sadness.
- Indirect phase (from 3 to 8 months after death) is a period of looking for a new identity, learning new roles: of a widow, a widower, an orphan.
- Phase of regaining balance (about a year from the death) is connected with coming to terms with the real situation of the lack of a close person and dealing with life. It is a period of life reorganization and acceptance of death. On average, the mourning lasts from one to two years. In the final phase of mourning, self-trust and the sense of self-value increase (Strelau, 2000:309-331).

Protecting factors in grief and mourning have been singled out which have been defined as particular resources available to people experiencing mourning, reducing stress connected with a close person's death. Among them, in accordance with the concept of positive growing old, social support has been indicated. Social support has been examined as a protective factor with taking into account the fact that elderly people function as a part of numerous family including children and their spouses, and often they also have vast connections with their own siblings and distant relatives. If an elderly person becomes a widow/

er than s/he belongs to an extensive social network, people surrounding her/him have personal interest in supporting them since it serves maintaining the continuity of social support system. When it comes to children, then supporting a despairing parent can also be a way to soothe one's grief after the loss of a parent. No wonder then that many widowed people ask their closest and distant family members for understanding and support, especially in the initial period of mourning a very important aspect of social and family support is whether it is perceived by the mourning person as significant and helpful. Significant support includes particular behaviours, for example emphatic listening, providing basic help, help in organizing things belonging to the deceased as well as making adopting a single person's identity easier (Strelau, 2000:278-279).

Conclusion

The described models of dying describe the complexity of mental and physical forces interaction, shaping individual reaction to the process of dying, including the human being's internal state in quality-wise various points to the continuum of dying. However, these approaches suggest that coping with death requires including both psychological mechanisms as well as social (family) support enabling to treat in a positive and dignified way the expected mental and physical changes auguring the end of life. Referring to and using protective factors in mourning which is, undoubtedly, emotional regulation and family support enable consequent building of an elderly and single person's identity.

In this aspect old age appears as a period of visible worsening of psycho-mental condition, which becomes an important aspect of existence and at the same time it forces to cope with existential problems in order to maintain a proper quality of life. And it is the way of experiencing growing old in health and disease that is a decisive characteristic of a dignified life, growing old and dying.

2

SENIOR EDUCATIONAL ACTIVATION

Role of Adult Education in the Literacy Provision

The article highlights the role of literacy in the implementation of social reforms and social policy. The peculiarities of literacy implementation as the means of achieving and promoting goals of dominant social forces in the society are revealed on the basis of a retrospective analysis. Conclusions are drawn about the current relevance of literacy as a basic human right.

The rapid pace of the modern world proves the need for continuous updating of knowledge and finding new ways of obtaining it. In the 21st century, as forecast by a famous American writer and futurist A. Toffler, an illiterate will not be a person who cannot read or write, but one who has never learned to learn.

Naturally, adult education is recognized as one of the most important means of development for the society and for an individual. As a part of lifelong learning, it aims to expand opportunities for lifelong learning and to create the conditions for constant self-improvement, to provide a set of individual knowledge and skills necessary for an active creative life, expressed in effective professional and social activities (Авдієнко, 1927:119).

Three main semantic areas are traditionally considered in the context of adult education: 1) literacy training - in the broadest sense, the possession of necessary basic knowledge and skills, including computer, functional, social skills and other; 2) vocational training, which includes training, retraining, advanced training; 3) general cultural education – additional, not associated with work (Мовчан, 2009:33). The result of adult education content is reflected in generalized socially important indicators of individual's erudition - literacy, professional competence and culture.

Literacy at all stages of historical development has always been an important socio-cultural characteristic of any society. Traditionally, the term "literacy" involves a degree of oral and written language skills. In statistical surveys, literacy is referred to as a person's ability to read, understand and write a short simple text about their daily life. In a broader culturological interpretation, it means the ability to write in accordance with the rules of grammar and spelling, read fluently and express own thoughts orally and in writing.

Today, the concept of literacy is not just the ability to read, write, or count, but "the ability to understand and use different types of information in everyday, professional and social life" (*Literacy for tomorrow*, 1997:12). Literacy is considered as an opportunity for an individual to be involved in the economic,

cultural, political, social practice of the society, in the literate environment at local, regional, national and global levels, as a condition for social and cultural development of the society.

The question of definition of “literacy” and its statistical expression in the censuses at the end of the first half of the 19th and 20th centuries was repeatedly discussed at the European and international meetings on vital statistics and census programs. The UNESCO General Conference at the tenth session in Paris in 1958 recommended that all countries – while conducting censuses – to treat as literate those people who can read with understanding and write a summary of their daily life.

The scientific concept of “adult literacy rate” includes the share of literate people aged 15 and older. The literacy index, which is often equated with literacy in general, is the ratio between the number of literate people and the total population of a country or a given area.

In modern statistics, there is a well-developed system of literacy calculation methods, which can help develop a more or less accurate picture of the number of the literate at a given time and within a given country. It includes capitation of the population as a direct, most comprehensive and accurate method, as well as literacy record by number of students, number of recruits, literacy level of people getting married, and so on.

The literacy rate depends on a combination of factors: geographical conditions, ethnographical structure of population, religious affiliation of the population, economic and political factors, which means that the literacy of a particular nation is closely dependent on a variety of aspects of life, being a function of many variables, a function of the whole system of social life. In turn, literacy also has an impact on the development of the society: its low level puts a brake on social progress and results in recession and weakening of the country’s position in the global community.

History shows that literacy is the means used by dominant social forces in the society to achieve their goals and promote their ideas. Perspectives of literacy goals are directly dependent on further conditions of the education system development. However, it is an indisputable fact that literacy rates in a particular society characterize the degree of its participation in the intellectual and spiritual life of humanity as a whole.

In our history, ignorance of the general population became an urgent social problem in mid-19th century. It was typical for all Ukrainian territories, which at that time were included in different countries - the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. The main reason were the changes in the socio-economic development of countries, the processes of transition to a bourgeois society: the abolition of serfdom, the rapid development of industry and economy, the growth of material production, renewal of management forms and methods in the agricultural sector, etc.

With the development of capitalist production and modernization of the economy, the difference between the level of technological production and the low educational level of the people involved increasingly became a contradiction of social development. Economic feasibility treated the objectives of literacy

as a prerequisite for social progress. Not only the public, but state institutions were aware of the need to change the role of spreading education and literacy at all levels since the development of scientific and industrial potential was possible only with a high rate of people's literacy.

But at that time the literacy rate of the population did not provide economic development needs. In the mid-19th century the condition of education in the Ukrainian provinces of the Russian Empire was one of the worst in the country. The share of illiterate population was significantly higher than the national average. Thus, in 1867-1868 there were 96.2% of illiterates among the recruits in the Kharkiv province, and 97.2% in the Poltava province. The literacy rate of the recruits was 3 times lower than the average rate in the European part of the empire¹¹⁸.

The low literacy level was proved by the first general census of the population in 1897. Its results showed that the percentage of literate population in the empire did not exceed 21.1%, while the total of 125,640,000 people were covered by census. The literacy rate of people aged 9 to 50 was 26.3%. Russia was an agrarian country and rural residents accounted for 66.6% of its population. The average literacy rate of the rural population was 21.7%. Urban residents accounted for 13.4% of the population and the literacy level among them was 55.6%¹¹⁹.

The overall men's literacy rate in the entire country was significantly higher than that among women - 29.3% and 13.1%, respectively. There was a significant difference in literacy for different age groups: 20.7% of people over 30 were literate (32.4% of men and 8.9% of women), and the literacy rate among 70-year-olds was 8% (12.2% of men, 3.7% of women)¹²⁰.

The 1897 census indicators gave the first researchers an opportunity to conclude that Russia in the late 19th century was one of the most backward countries in Europe. 48 nations had no written language. About 80% of children and adolescents could not even attend primary school; secondary and especially higher education was available just for wealthy people. The access to state schools was 6-7 times lower than in the UK, Germany and France, 4-5 times lower than in Austria-Hungary and Denmark, 2-3 times lower than in Greece, Portugal and Turkey. In the U.S. students made up 19.4% of the total population, 17.14% in England, 17% in Germany, 16.6% in Switzerland, and only 3.85% in Russia. Russia was significantly behind the developed world in terms of education spending: the U.S. spent 4.5 roubles per pupil in the 1870s, Russia spent only 3.8 copecks (Сологуб, 2004:35-36). Thus, the current literacy rate in Russia became an obstacle to further development.

The level of literacy in the Ukrainian territories of the Austro-Hungarian jurisdiction was no better. According to the census in 1880, only 9.2% of the Bukovynian population could read and write, 1.1% could only read, while 89.7% was

¹¹⁸ А. Г. Рашин, Население России за 100 лет (1813 - 1913). Статистические очерки. <http://istmat.info/node/86>

¹¹⁹ Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской Империи 1897 г. Распределение населения по полу, возрасту и грамотности, Демоскоп weekly. http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_age_97.php

¹²⁰ Первая всеобщая перепись населения Российской Империи 1897 г. Распределение населения по полу, возрасту и грамотности, Демоскоп weekly// http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/rus_age_97.php

illiterate¹²¹. In Galicia, 11.3% of population was literate. It was the lowest literacy rate among all Austrian provinces (in Lower Austria, literate people made up 77%, 72.9% in Bohemia, and 70.4% in Salzburg)¹²².

During the second half of 19th century and early 20th century, the question of the literacy status was in the center of public attention, it was the subject of many discussions and projects developed by government and NGOs, and was constantly discussed on the pages of newspapers.

In any country, the problem of increasing the level of education of its population always has two aspects: on the one hand, the development of education in a natural way, i.e. expanding children's education up to the introduction of universal compulsory education, on the other hand, the teaching of illiterate adults.

The rapid development of industry and economy, as well as the growth of material production required skilled workers, and newly established banks and exchanges needed competent employees. This fact gave impetus to the development of comprehensive and professional schooling while prioritizing the forms of adult education, which would provide economic institutions with educated personnel in a short period of time. Both the public and the government were aware of the situation, therefore a broad social movement on creating an education system for adults began in the second half of the 19th century.

The imperial government demonstrated quite a contradictory standpoint in this area. On the one hand, the government and the authorities depended on socio-economic changes since the development of capitalism in the country required skilled workers and specialists for industry, transport and agriculture. That is why the government allowed and to some extent encouraged the spread of literacy. On the other hand, it was being done in a very limited way, as literacy had always been regarded by the government as a "double-edged sword" which should be handled very cautiously: "Education, like salt in food, is required by people in a strictly dosed amount," - stated A. Shyshkov, Minister of Education (Петрова, 2010:25). A practical example of this inconsistency was the closing of all Sunday schools for adult education established by the public – deemed as "unreliable" – by the government order of July 10, 1862. But public demand for literacy was so high that soon Sunday schools for adults were revived on the basis of zemstvo local budgets.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the problem of general education was not only the subject of an intense discussion in the society, but an essential point in the programs of all political parties. Problems of education and literacy in the country were so acute and burning that none of the parties could fail to include requirements for the development of education in their program. In the pre-October period, the Bolsheviks were leaders in the struggle for a new democratic school following the requirements in the field of education, formulated in the RSDRP Program of 1903: free general compulsory education for children of both sexes under 16; elimination of class schools and restrictions in education on a national scale; separation of church from school, teaching in the native language, providing poor students with food, clothing and training aids by the state.

¹²¹ Österreichische Statistik, Wien, 1882:184-185.

¹²² Österreichische Statistik, Wien, 1882:118-119.

The requirements of economic development at the beginning of the 20th century increasingly demanded a higher level of literacy of the general population. However, the social class orientation of the state policy in the field of education and the lack of funding prevented the implementation of educational reforms. The real historical conditions for the elimination of illiteracy in Ukraine under the Russian rule were formed after the October Revolution of 1917.

The elimination of illiteracy in the country occupied a prominent place in the program of broad social changes, the implementation of which was proclaimed by the Bolsheviks. However, the economic factor was crucial in the fight against illiteracy. The Soviet government faced the issue of dealing with the difficult economic situation in which the country found itself after the First World War, three revolutions and Civil war. They had a task not only to restore the destroyed economy, but also to eliminate the technical and economic backwardness, which was a prerequisite for strengthening the defense and preservation of sovereignty of the newly formed country. The capitalist surrounding and economic blockade of the Soviet state were those challenges which made it vital to resolve those issues. However, they could not be resolved without creating both highly skilled engineering personnel and labor force.

In addition to economic reasons, the need for eradicating illiteracy in the country was stipulated by the Bolsheviks' pedagogical doctrine. The content of this doctrine was fully determined by the main political aim - the creation of a new type of society with the dominant position of the Communist Party, the formation of new spiritual qualities, moral norms and beliefs. Such a task could not be performed while maintaining illiteracy of the general population as the main engine of any ideology is the written word.

By the end of the Civil War, the literacy rate was lower than in the period before the First World War. This was primarily due to the fact that military operations have significantly reduced the male population, which provided the bulk of the literate. The appearance of the vast mass of homeless children did not contribute to the growth of literacy. Total devastation, especially in the areas affected by the civil war, led to the elimination and destruction of schools. Long-term tsarist Russification policy towards education, neglecting the rights of non-Russian population, barring of their native language teaching, also had its contribution.

Ukrainian people continued to be at a rather low educational level. In 1920, out of a thousand inhabitants only 317 were literate (Авдієнко, 1927:81). Only 22.2% of school-age children became students (Ясницький, 1965:40). The solving of urgent problems in the field of education began in the earliest days of the Soviet state. The government policy in this area was mainly the continuation of progressive reforms initiated by progressive community in the pre-revolutionary period, but not completed for historical reasons. The first resolutions and actions of the Soviet government were based on achievements of the national pedagogical theory and practice, but made their content more radical.

Targeted actions to combat illiteracy began after the publication of the UkrSSR CPC decree "On the fight against illiteracy" on May 21, 1921, that completely duplicated a similar RSFSR CPC decree of 26 December 1919 (Мовчан,

2009). According to the document, complete elimination of illiteracy throughout the country was foreseen: educational programs on illiteracy elimination, school of literacy, etc. were created. All persons aged from 8 to 50 who could not read or write were obliged to learn to read and write in Ukrainian, Russian or another language chosen at their discretion. The literate population had a duty to join the ranks of teachers for the illiterate. Individuals who shied away from this duty or prevented illiterate from learning were subject to criminal liability. Workers-students at educational programs on illiteracy elimination were provided with benefits: on the day of studies their working time was reduced by two hours with maintained wages.

The semi-literate and the illiterate were recorded. At businesses, records were made with the participation of trade unions, the Komsomol, women's societies etc. and the rest of the population was recorded by house-to-house canvassing. All illiterate and semi-literate citizens aged from 14 to 30 were subject to recording.

A special instruction explained to the organizers of illiteracy elimination classes that illiterate citizens were those who: a) could not read or write, b) could read but not write; c) could copy but not read; d) knew the letters but read with long pauses and unclearly (Мовчан, 2009).

The fight against illiteracy was headed by Main Political Education of People's Committee of Education of Ukr.SSR. In 1921, an interagency Ukrainian Extraordinary Commission for Illiteracy Combating was established under its authority. On October 19, 1923, All-Ukrainian Society for Promotion of Illiteracy Elimination (the "Down with Illiteracy!" society) was established and headed by H.I.Petrovskyy, a chairman of the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee.

Questions of the course and consequences of the work deployment of all agencies dealing with the elimination of illiteracy were discussed at special meetings, conferences and meetings in the center and regions. In particular, in October 1922, in Kharkiv, the First Ukrainian meeting on illiteracy elimination was held, where the following issues were discussed: report and prospects for the illiteracy elimination in Ukraine, employee training and self-training, methods and work content at schools and literacy classes, etc.

Organized efforts of the government and the public, with all their difficulties, contradictions and shortcomings, gave positive results. By 1927 52.6% of the Ukr.SSR had mastered the literacy basics, in 1937 the number of the literate reached 85.6%, and in 1959 they accounted for 93.5% of the population (Мовчан, 2009).

Thus, the issue of literacy was one of the most burning at different stages of historical development of the society. The resolving of this problem had a key position for the implementation of all social reforms and social policy. In general, socially significant indicator of individual education, the human literacy rate determines the accessibility of any information obtained by the society and, therefore, a measure of adaptability to the surrounding natural and social conditions.

The search for and analysis of ways of achieving literacy is one of the issues that need urgent solution and at this stage of the society, when the awareness of

the need to take local socio-economic, political and cultural realities, historical traditions and practices into account increases; reviving of primary infrastructure, which would provide an opportunity not only to acquire literacy, but actually use it.

Therefore, we think that it is appropriate to learn from past experiences that can serve as an important source for the implementation of literacy, not as the means of achieving and promoting objectives of dominant social forces in the society, but as a basic human right, an individual's opportunity to be involved in the economic, cultural, political, social practice, the competent environment at local, regional, national and global levels.

Educational Aspects of the Intergenerational Bonds between the Elderly and their Grandchildren

Introductory notes and terminology used in the paper

The dynamic changes occurring in the socio-economic sphere affect the elderly in a particular way. First of all, the average life expectancy among elderly people is growing and they are active in the labor market for longer. Secondly, we can clearly observe a growing tendency for the elderly to strive to improve their standard of living. In addition, promoting physical attractiveness, excellent physical condition and good mental health preserved well into the old age seems to become increasingly important for the elderly. The media less and less often present the image of an old person that matches the reality and shows signs of body aging. Older people are also aware of the fact that it is the done thing to be socially active. At the same time, the social status of the older generations is changing rapidly. It is still determined by cultural factors, mainly by tradition (e.g. the Silesian region in Poland; or Spain, where the family spirit is still perceived positively and cultivated); however, it is being increasingly diversified by the fact of belonging to a particular social class and, in consequence, by the material status of the elderly.

In the following discussion the author will often use the term *senior*. This word (derived from Latin: older, from *senex* old) may mean: 'senior' – the oldest member of a family, organization or group, higher in rank or length of service, as well as for example 'a senior bishop'. Therefore, the term has positive and elevating connotations. In the present paper, the 'senior' will be treated as a synonym of 'grandmother' or 'grandfather', while 'seniors' will be used as the equivalent of 'grandparents', meaning either 'grandmother' or 'grandfather'. It should be stressed that the age range of people that in the present text are treated as seniors may vary: there are some grandparents are just under forty while others are ancient.

The main aim of the presented dissertation is to show the educational aspects of intergenerational bonds between seniors and their grandchildren that can be perceived while observing different types of activities that the two groups participate in.

Older people's needs

Quality of life, as it is understood by humans, is strongly influenced by fulfilling the needs. In the literature of the subject we can find many classifications of human needs. The authors most often refer to the hierarchy of needs proposed by the American psychiatrist Abraham Maslow. In his theory he included five levels of needs that are often portrayed in the shape of a pyramid to reflect the hierarchy. At the bottom there is the level of the most fundamental, physiological needs, which is followed by: the need for safety, the need for belonging (acceptance, friendship, and love), the need for esteem (success, respect, importance and prestige) and finally the need for self-actualization (fulfilling ambitions, self-development on all levels, growing self-esteem). The basic assumption of Maslow's theory is that the basic level of needs must be fulfilled and only then will the individual strongly desire higher level needs (Maslow, 1990:72-86).

In the light of the above-mentioned theory we are tempted to formulate a question: Can we analyze older people's needs in separation from other people's needs and is it necessary to propose a specific classification? The elderly occupy an important place in the society. Therefore their needs have to be analyzed from two different points of view: taking into account the same needs as other age groups have and additional needs – related to health, social status, physical and mental health.

In the case of older people, aside from material needs, it is important to distinguish the needs, or rather expectations, of a psychosocial character. The classification proposed by the American gerontologist Clark Tibbitts is quite accurate and therefore worth mentioning. He identifies the following needs:

- the need for participating in socially useful activities,
- the need for being a part of society, community or a group and the need for playing an important role in them,
- the need for managing the increasing amount of free time in a satisfactory way ,
- the need for maintaining normal social relations,
- the need for recognition as a human being,
- the need for creating occasions and opportunities to self-expression and a sense of accomplishment,
- the need for a relevant psychological and mental stimulation,
- the need for health care and access to medical care,
- the need for a defined lifestyle and keeping in touch with the family,
- the need for spiritual satisfaction (Dyczewski, 1994:125).

The above-mentioned needs show the importance of other people's presence, the importance of taking meaningful actions, the right time-management, and a feeling of being needed. Older people are needed and they want to feel as such (Mielczarek, 2010:42).

B. Stępień supplements Tibbitts' classification with other needs, such as: intellectual, socio-cultural, educational, and one related to the need for the opportunity to take part in family and social life. The need for self-respect, self-esteem and self-appreciation gains a special importance. It is quite difficult to fulfill

them as they are related to seniors' decreased activity, limited social relations and to the difficulties with adapting to new conditions in their surroundings (Stępień 2004:226–230).

Many seniors strive to broaden their knowledge, they want to create artistic work, and, without doubt, it helps them to maintain physical and mental fitness. The elderly want to help others, as it provides them with a feeling of being useful. Many of them have the need for being active, they want to feel independent and free to organize their own lives. The elderly aspire to being able to independently fulfill the existential, psychological and social, socio-cultural as well as educational needs. Such factors facilitate the adaptation to old age and living in balance with their surroundings; they help to improve the physical and mental state of an individual, they prevent from the feeling of loneliness and make seniors' lives more attractive (Kędzior, 2006:55).

It is easy to notice that suitably strong intergenerational bonds present in seniors' families facilitate the fulfilling of the above needs.

Active living vs. improved quality of life

Being active is one of the basic human needs. It is a prerequisite for a normal development of a human being that enables living a creative and harmonious life, helps in curing various diseases as well as delays the process of aging. The research carried out among the elderly shows that the lack of activity and social life as well as the feeling of being unnecessary may lead to isolation, social emptiness and loneliness, and as a consequence to a form of social death (Ostrowska, 1991:75).

According to The PWN Dictionary of the Polish Language, *activity* is defined as the tendency or the ability to perform intensive action, to take initiative; it is an active participation in something (*Wielki słownik języka polskiego*, 2006:125). Psychologists and educationalists consider it essential for the correct development of a human being and a successful participation in society (Mielczarek, 2010:147). It is a series of actions directed at stimulating a person to participate in diverse spheres of life. Being active is a way of communicating with other people and the world that surrounds us (Mielczarek, 1999:125). The "Encyclopedia of pedagogy in the 21st century" (*Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*) edited by T. Pilch mentions 3 basic types of activity: 1) physical activity, 2) cultural activity and 3) professional activity. All of the above are closely related to the notion of stimulation.

Stimulation is a term that can be defined in various ways. It can signify stimulating a dormant activity, liberating a suppressed activity, modifying an ill-directed activity, motivating and stimulating the body to activity (Tarkowski, 1998:178). Stimulation is a process directed at increasing a general and a selective activity. By general stimulation we usually understand mobilizing the whole body, while selective (directed) activity means increasing the level of physical, mental, creative, sexual, professional, educational and religious activity (Szatur-Jaworska, Błądowski, Dziągiewska, 2006:161).

Barbara Zaniewska claims that stimulating active living is a programmed, systematic and maximally individualized process of working with an individual and a group, in order to learn about their abilities and limits and motivate them to action. The aim of such type of stimulation is encouraging the individuals to make changes in any particular sphere of their lives, developing the willingness to gain knowledge and learn new things, sensitizing them to other people's needs and limits, motivating them to cooperate as well as stopping them from excessive thinking about themselves (Zaniewska, 1995:14).

In the case of older people, being active may have numerous functions:

- adaptive, which helps in a better adaptation of the elderly to living in a new social and familiar situation;
- integrating, leading to the integration with a group to which the elderly belong and to make up for different shortages;
- educational, which helps to develop and improve personality traits and features;
- recreational and entertainment function which eliminates stress, brings back the will to live, organizes free time;
- socio-psychological, leading to improving the quality of life, facilitating life satisfaction and improving the authority of an individual (Zaniewska, 1995:14).

Being active conditions the fulfillment of all human needs – biological, as well as social and cultural. It is also a prerequisite for fulfilling social roles, being a part of a group and a society. In contrast, a lack of activity may lead to the loss of acceptance on the part of the people around and, in consequence, to loneliness. There are many factors that influence the undertaking of activities by the elderly. They are as follows:

- education – people with higher education are more active,
- the influence of family – being active is dependent on the personality, family, background, as well as on the contact with children, grandchildren and other relatives,
- health and physical condition – people who are healthier and in a better physical condition are more prone to be active,
- living standards – they may effectively limit the activities that can be undertaken,
- sex – there are more retired women and they are more active than men,
- place of residence – (village, town) influences the types of activities that are offered to seniors,
- the influence of cultural institutions – if there is a dynamically working cultural institution at the place of residence, seniors are more active (Szatur – Jaworska, Błędowski, Dziegielewska, 2006:161 – 162).

The quality of life is often determined by the types of activities that people participate in. The authors who examine the issues of geriatrics, distinguish a few spheres of activity, namely:

1. home and family activity, which is understood as performing various actions related to housekeeping and with the life of close family.

2. cultural activity – it is usually expressed by urban lifestyle and is related to e.g. reading, watching TV, listening to the radio, visiting cultural institutions or senior clubs.
3. professional activity – it fulfills the need for respect, being useful and needed. It protects from lowering the social status, helps to improve the mood and self-assessment of health status.
4. social activity – which is the less popular activity among seniors. People who have already performed the role of a social worker in their surroundings usually undertake it.
5. educational activity – which helps the elderly in continuous self-development. The process of learning at old age can become a type of mind and memory training, it can provide the pleasure of becoming familiar with new issues and getting to know new people.
6. religious activity – the importance of religion and taking part in religious celebrations increases with age, therefore it is crucial in the context of the present paper. We can indicate a positive relation between religious practices and the adaptation to old age.
7. recreational activity – the elderly need rest, physical exercise and having a favorite leisure time activity. Gardening also plays a crucial role in the lives of older people. It is a kind of compensation for professional life and a way of being in contact with nature, which at the same time is related to being in contact with other people. Above all else, however, it is a type of physical activity. New forms of recreational activities, such as tourism, sport, play, club activities as well as different hobbies can effectively prevent physical and psychological deterioration. They make it possible to break life's monotony and offer an attractive way of spending free time (Orzechowska, 1999:28 – 29).

Promoting active living among the elderly as a way of strengthening the bonds with their grandchildren in the light of research

The research was carried out in the first quarter of 2013 in the Opole region using the diagnostic survey method through the direct interview technique. The participants of the research were 50 children: 30 six-year-olds and 20 seven-year-olds. The subjects were randomly chosen, however, the choice of an even number of boys and girls (25) was intentional. Two thirds of the children live in a city. Each child was asked to choose one grandmother and one grandfather to talk about during the interview. The questions asked during the interview were categorized but children were able to express themselves freely. The duration of each interview was around one hour. The results of the survey are discussed below.

First of all, the way grandchildren perceive their grandparents is one of the aspects that reflect intergenerational bonds. Children who participated in the research were asked to describe their grandmothers or grandfathers.

The participants focused mostly on the physical description. They mentioned characteristics such as height, overweight, underweight and figure. They also highlighted the characteristic features of the face: grey hair, wrinkles, skin defects, hairstyle, moustache and beard. The majority of the children perceived wearing glasses as an inherent part of their grandparents' image. They also paid attention to the clothing being different than their parents', implying that it was unfashionable and inelegant ("grandma always wears an apron and grandpa old trousers and a cap").

Another aspect of the image are the personality features that participants ascribed to the elderly, such as: a cheerful attitude expressed by a smile on their face, openness and honesty, ingeniousness, patience, diligence, as well as a sense of humor and wit. It is important for the children that their grandparents treat them with care and empathy. The love that children receive from the grandparents is also of great importance. There were only a few participants who pointed out some negative personality traits: manifesting physical discomfort and sadness, excessive criticism, tendency to constant preaching or acerbity.

The descriptions also included typical behavior of the grandparents that reflects their habits. To sum up, the image that grandchildren have of their grandparents is generally quite positive and it reflects the existence of strong emotional bonds between them. Some children talk about their grandparents with great enthusiasm: "my grandma is very pretty", "my grandpa is like a father to me", "grandma and grandpa are the best in the world". Three participants mentioned their grandparents' death. In all cases the description was full of superlatives, quite idealistic: "my grandma is in a deep sleep", "my dear grandpa is in heaven and I miss him very much".

In order to assess the quality of intergenerational bonds between the elderly and their grandchildren we take into account the frequency of their contacts and the attitude that they adopt towards this issue.

In 5 cases (10%) the grandchildren live together with their grandparents, a fact which regulates the continuity of their contacts. As many as 11 grandchildren (22%) are accompanied to or collected from the kindergarten by their grandparents on a daily basis. Such situations facilitate daily contacts with the grandparents. Only 6 participants (12%) define their contacts with the elderly as occasional, sometimes they meet only during important religious or family celebrations, but this is usually the result of living far away from each other. The remaining participants visit their grandparents quite often: even a few times a week.

The mutual contact between the two generations is considered to be really necessary and beneficial. When asked "Do you like meeting with your grandma or grandpa?" 42 children (84%) responded "definitely yes", 5 (10%) "probably yes", and only 3 participants (6%) consider being in contact with their grandparents as unpleasant or unnecessary. In turn, the question: "Do you prefer spending time with your grandma or grandpa?" the answers were almost evenly distributed.

In contrast, the elderly define being in contact with their grandchildren as very desirable. They look forward to it and it adds meaning to their lives. Grandparents do not favor a particular grandchild over others.

The way grandparents spend time with their grandchildren is illustrated by the data in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic ways in which the elderly spend time with their grandchildren

| Type of activity | Frequency | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----|
| | No. | % |
| play and entertainment | 50 | 100 |
| daily household chores | 22 | 44 |
| education and culture | 26 | 52 |
| recreation, sport and leisure | 42 | 84 |
| other types of activity | 16 | 32 |

Table 2 illustrates more detailed grandchildren's preferences with respect to participating in various activities with their grandparents.

Table 2. The favourite activities that grandchildren and their grandparents participate in

| Type of activity | Frequency | |
|---|-----------|-----|
| | No. | % |
| • physical activities: | | |
| taking a walk | 48 | 96 |
| walking the dog | 13 | 26 |
| riding a bike | 21 | 42 |
| playing with a ball | 20 | 40 |
| nordic walking | 8 | 16 |
| sleigh riding and sledding | 23 | 46 |
| activities involving movement on the playground or sports field | 43 | 86 |
| playing table tennis | 7 | 14 |
| • activities related to hobbies: | | |
| gardening and cultivation | 19 | 38 |
| going mushrooming | 11 | 22 |
| fishing | 8 | 16 |
| feeding animals | 18 | 36 |
| model-making | 13 | 26 |
| stamp collecting and other types of collecting | 18 | 36 |
| • cultural activities and entertainment: | | |
| reading stories, fairy tales and books for children | 50 | 100 |
| watching TV, DVD or VHS films etc | 50 | 100 |
| going to the cinema | 47 | 94 |
| going to the ZOO | 13 | 26 |

| | | |
|---|----|-----|
| going to amusement parks or funfairs | 38 | 76 |
| taking part in local festivities and other celebrations organized by local governments or retailers | 44 | 88 |
| going to the theatre | 13 | 26 |
| communicating by e-mail or visiting websites | 42 | 84 |
| making family photo albums and organizing photos | 18 | 36 |
| making various functional crafts | 36 | 72 |
| taking part in various exhibitions; children prefer open-air exhibitions | 19 | 38 |
| • household chores: | | |
| preparing meals (especially cooking dinner and baking cakes) | 39 | 78 |
| doing the shopping at shopping centres | 41 | 82 |
| cleaning and tidying the house | 43 | 86 |
| • strictly educational activities: | | |
| conversation about different topics | 50 | 100 |
| learning letters and numbers | 50 | 100 |
| learning to read, count and write | 48 | 96 |
| learning to sing and recite | 17 | 34 |
| solving problems and rebuses | 21 | 42 |
| finding information related to different fields of knowledge (children are still keenly interested in: nature, especially animals; long extinct dinosaurs; astronomy; impressive nature phenomena) | 50 | 100 |
| achieving information technology and media skills (using the computer and computer programs, including word processor and other software, using the Internet, using electronic means of communication; especially mobile phones but also multimedia players, smartphones and tablets) - various types of games and play | 43 | 86 |

On the basis of the interviews we can also draw the following conclusions:

- listening to radio stations, especially to Polskie Radio Program I (a radio channel broadcast by the Polish public broadcaster) and to „Radio Maryja” (a religious radio station) is an activity preferred by seniors but not accepted by their grandchildren,
- seniors’ motor activity takes the form of endurance training,
- preparing meals for and with grandchildren has a positive influence on changing eating habits and diet of the elderly,
- only 6 of all the participants (12%) mention attending religious services, taking part in religious celebrations and other forms of religious practice with their grandparent; as a rule grandparents do not try to indoctrinate their grandchildren with regard to their worldview or religious beliefs;

- in contrast, 6 of the early primary education students (30%) do homework with one of their grandparents,
- the cultural activity that seniors participate in together with their grandchildren rarely concerns the so-called high culture (listening to classical music, going to philharmonic concerts, going to the opera or ballet); in other cases the activities are usually of a receptive kind (seeing family albums, listening to music), the impersonation (reproductive) and expressive activities are mentioned less frequently.

There are a few types of activity grandchildren prefer, however, they are never performed by grandparents. They include:

- swimming, swimming lessons, going to water parks,
- dancing, dance lessons and elements of choreography,
- learning foreign languages,
- activities related to winter sports.

Ludic competence of seniors

Playing is the basic form of activity carried out by every young child. Playing is an action performed voluntarily for the purpose of seeking pleasure. It is based on the events and situations observed in a social life context. Play is an activity that follows a set of rules. For this reason, through a developed play situation and a suitably chosen range of objects used while playing, engaging in play enhances socialization and children's readiness to abide by social contracts.

There is a great diversity of children's play. With respect to the level of activity of a child we can distinguish voluntary play, which is intrinsically motivated, and play directed by adults or peers (Okoń, 1990:43-44). In the case of the research participants, the role of the initiator was played equally by the children and their grandparents. It was mostly an individual or shared play. Team or parallel play was less frequent (Geta, 1994:183-184).

The educationalists mention four basic types of play that kindergarten pupils are involved in: constructive, thematic, didactic and play involving physical movement. All of these types may be initiated spontaneously. We can also mention creative and scientific play (Tyszkowa, 1993:87). Anna Klim-Klimaszewska additionally distinguishes:

1. Search games – which give children the opportunity to solve difficult problems that provoke strong emotions; they also promote a direct contact with nature and social reality expressed in the game's context; they teach discipline, form bonds between friends and facilitate visual perception. Such games are based on searching, tracking and achieving success; they include, among others: hide-and-peek, tag games, picking flowers or fruit from the trees, searching for previously hidden objects and collecting things;
2. Scientific play – they shape children's minds and help develop their interests; a kindergarten pupil gains new experience and knowledge while playing through exploratory activity; the aim of scientific play is solving

scientific problems, discovering and exploring objects or situations previously unknown;

3. Dramatic play – it is reflected in children’s theatre performances; the young ones take on different roles, thus gaining a range of abilities; thanks to this kind of play they learn how to cooperate with others, how to move in space as well as how to listen attentively and express themselves correctly; in addition, this type of play develops the imagination and creativity of children who in this way learn about themselves, trust themselves and believe in their abilities; dramatic play also helps to fulfill the need for the characteristic of kindergarten children *animisms*, that is spontaneous behaviors evoked by their vivid imagination (Klim-Klimaszewska, 2010:46-48).

Table 3. Children’s favourite play types

| No. | Play type | Participants’ answers No. = 50 | |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----|
| | | No. | % |
| 1 | Spontaneous play | 47 | 94 |
| 2 | Play involving physical movement | 43 | 86 |
| 3 | Thematic play | 41 | 82 |
| 4 | Constructive play | 38 | 76 |
| 5 | Manipulative play | 26 | 52 |
| 6 | Search games | 46 | 92 |
| 7 | Individual and team play | 47 | 94 |
| 8 | Didactic play | 34 | 68 |
| 9 | Dramatic play | 27 | 54 |
| 10 | Creative and scientific play | 19 | 38 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 |

With respect to play involving physical movement, we should stress the fact that children appreciate especially that which is handed down from generation to generation. This is the case of the popular hide-and-see game, “Zabawa w kotka i myszkę” (a type of tag game) or “Stary niedźwiedź mocno śpi” (a game similar to “What’s the time, Mr. Wolf?”) and “Rolnik sam w dolinie” (the Polish equivalent of “Oranges and Lemons”). The fact that the last two games use a text and a melody makes them more attractive. When a game involving physical movement is aimed at winning, it becomes even more attractive. Quite often no material prize is involved and the victory is only symbolic. Nevertheless, children also like simple chase games; perceptual, motor and social participation activities; games involving jumping and hopping (“Hopschotch” is still popular); climbing, throwing, catching, rolling and aiming. Games involving rhythmic movement are organized less frequently.

Thematic play is more characteristic of the kindergarten period, it is based on free and fictitious replaying of various actions, functions and social roles by children. Children use different props as the material, while the subject matter

and content of such play is the result of their immediate life experience. The youngest kindergarten pupils usually replay the situations and events observed while watching adults. The subject matter of thematic play is quite often determined by using a particular toy that children have at hand. In turn, older children prefer to follow a well-defined set of rules while playing their roles during thematic play. The aim of such play is replaying and transforming the reality through active participation (Klim-Klimaszewska, 2010:46-48). It is the only type of play that enables children to transform the theme. Despite the fact that, while playing, children perform the same actions for a long period of time, there is a possibility of changing the course of events. Children constantly enrich their play by adding their own experiences and new situations. In this type of play symbolism takes on a great importance as children assign a clear meaning to individual objects (Tatala, 1998:39). Children play the roles of parents, doctors, teachers or fire fighters which helps them to gain knowledge of our daily life, work and different professions (Okoń, 1990:160,252).

Constructive play is based on building things using the material that is available. We can distinguish playing in the sand using a toy shovel, sandcastle moulds or bucket as well as building with blocks, sticks or similar materials. Younger children use basic accessories which help them make simple "sand cakes" or dig "grooves". They are mostly interested in building as such, and they do not need any previous planning of their play. I. Dudzińska identifies the following types of constructive play:

- constructing and joining various elements;
- building with blocks;
- playing in the sand;
- creating and constructing objects and toys that will be useful during thematic and dramatic play;
- constructing in the open air involving joining larger elements such as e.g. boards (Dudzińska, 1976:20-21).

Children are enthusiastic about playing with Lego blocks, regardless of their sex and age.

Manipulative play was less favored, children mentioned playing with toy cars, dolls and (sic!) popular electronic toys.

Among different types of play, role-playing was quite popular. In this category children distinguished: playing the pirates, mermaids or playing "the house".

An important position among the activities that grandparents and grandchildren participate in is occupied by various types of games. We can distinguish different board and card games, for example: draughts, Ludo, Nine Men's Morris, as well as chess. 7-year-olds, especially boys, like playing Monopoly. As expected, children prefer computer games, ranging from simple PlayStation games to more technologically advanced computer games that require high-tech equipment.

Table 4. The amount of free time spent on playing with their child according to the parents

| No. | Category | Participants' answers No. =50 | |
|-----|-------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|
| | | No. | % |
| 1. | A few hours a day | 34 | 68 |
| 2. | A few hours a week | 8 | 16 |
| 3. | Less than 1 hour a week | 5 | 10 |
| 4. | Not at all | 3 | 6 |
| | Total | 50 | 100 |

On the basis of the research carried out among children we can establish the following ludic competencies of seniors:

- Being familiar with possible types of play that are recommended to enhance the process of education of kindergarten pupils and early primary school students.
- Being familiar with other – not educational – types of play, especially those that children can participate in during their free time, both on their own and with their peers, parents or carers.
- The ability to adapt a particular type and form of play to specific educational needs or other diverse situations in which it is advisable that children's play is based on deep understanding of the features and functions of play as a way of stimulating activity.
- Knowledge of children's preferences in relation to play.
- The ability to create new original play directed at children.
- A positive attitude towards play in general, and especially towards children's play and playing with children.
- Promoting play and toys characteristic for a specific region, including long-forgotten play and toys.
- A positive attitude towards play expressed through active participation.
- The ability to stimulate children to take part in play.
- The knowledge of and the ability to use different types of toys, including virtual toys.
- A critical assessment of play and toys offered to children by different entities, including, or better said, particularly the entities that act on the television, on the Internet, in mobile network etc.
- Active cooperation with the parents and carers dedicated to supporting the children in choosing play, games and toys that stimulate their development, also by organizing the play and participating in it.
- Diagnosing and the ability to guarantee safety and broadly understood hygiene during play.
- Being aware of the moral and legal aspects of ludic behavior.
- Acknowledging the role of play and toys in children's development.
- Perceiving ludic activities that kindergarten and school pupils are involved in as one of the ways of promoting equality in education.

- The ability to develop in children the right attitude towards shared play with their peers and towards play itself.
- The ability to diagnose a child's social status judging from his or her play preferences. (Tell me how you play and what you play with and I will tell you who you are).
- Up-to-date knowledge of the market of toys, with respect to both the assortment and prices.

Conclusions

Since the research was carried out on a small scale, it is narrow in scope. However, we can draw some important conclusions. They are as follows:

1. The intergenerational bonds between seniors and their six- and seven-year-old grandchildren are very strong and they embrace various dimensions.
2. The mutual interpersonal contacts between grandparents and grandchildren are frequent and their duration is considerable.
3. Children learn and adapt themselves to the world through the imitation of adults. Therefore grandparents' responsibility for the education of their grandchildren is exceptional, as they are an authority for young children and play the role of moderators of behavior and attitudes.
4. Spending time together with their grandchildren enhances the physical condition and well-being of seniors on all levels: their life force, general psychological condition and satisfaction derived from individual spheres of life.
5. Since play is the basic type of children's activity, from the educational point of view the scope and the level of grandparent's ludic competence is of great importance.
6. Being in contact with grandchildren stimulates or even initiates the active forms of time spending of seniors on almost all levels.
7. Strong intergenerational bonds with grandparents enhance grandchildren's sense of family identity, regional and national identity and often also European and international identity.
8. Stimulating seniors through being in contact with their grandchildren can be said to have the function of therapy, for example: therapy with words, music therapy, art therapy, play therapy, ergotherapy or silvotherapy.
9. Spending free time with grandchildren is an indirect way to keep in touch with old friends and helps to establish new friendships.
10. In relation to education, active living has a bilateral character. New competences are developed not only by children but also by seniors who are supported by the young generation. It is especially true for information technology competencies and those related to using contemporary means of communication.

Activation of Seniors through Intergenerational Education

Introduction

Activation of seniors is both a great need as well as a challenge of our times. The elderly have lived longer and enjoyed much better health lately. Currently, getting involved in various forms of activities is becoming possible for the majority of seniors (especially for those belonging to a group of so-called "young elders"). What is more, the involvement in all sorts of activities by Polish seniors is becoming more accepted by other age groups.

One of the means of activating the elderly is through intergenerational education. What is this type of education about? What is the feasibility of intergenerational education? What are the benefits of participation in it? What rules should be obeyed while undertaking the task of implementation of intergenerational education? These questions determine the content of the article. The theoretical context of the study will be enriched by the author's own experiences and observations deriving from her participation in the creation of the concept and implementations of the values of the project called "The Intergenerational Activity Academy- Experiences Linking Generations".

Activation of people in their late adulthood - terminology, values and forms

The term "activation" means "ratcheting activity", "activating oneself" and "to activate" is to "be activated" (Sobol, 1997:7). Activation is defined as "a set of activities designed to enable a person to participate in various areas of life, in other words - to lead an active lifestyle. (...) Activation should be understood both as a process undertaken to achieve particular goals, as well as a result of such a process and, finally, achieving the goal." (Kozaczuk, 1999:25). Activation is also interpreted as a "social process of creating conditions and opportunities to be active or to optimize the already existing forms of activation of the people involved" (Chabior, 2011:10).

In this context, Agata Chabior speaks about the social activation of the elderly, which is recognized as "a complex social process, social initiative, whose primary purpose is the inclusion of the marginalized and those at risk of exclusion from the broader social structures, through engaging them in all kinds of

activities. This is an effort to create conditions, circumstances, situations and places that will stimulate action or make arrangements and conditions for active lifestyles of older people as much as possible on different levels. This is a process of creating social development initiatives in order to activate people in their late adulthood.”(Chabior, 2011:65). This process is carried out in local communities, and it is executed through different entities (social and cultural institutions as well as associations) (Chabior, 2011:10).

Activation of the elderly is based mainly on encouraging them to participate in various forms of activity. And, as the authors of the journal “Na Temat” claim, taking a variety of forms of activity is also a challenge forcing seniors to make use of their competences¹²³. Moreover, the manifestation of various forms of activity by those in the late phase of adulthood gives them a lot of benefits, including maintaining their physical and mental health, helping them remain independent for longer, it also helps them in establishing and maintaining social interactions and finding meaning in life, it helps them develop interests and passions and favors the development of personality. All of this is of extraordinary value. Therefore, working with the elderly cannot lack the activation of seniors.

Among the possible forms of activity of the Polish senior, the participation of older people in activities of an educational matter seems most activating – especially when it comes to intergenerational education.

The concept of “intergenerational education” and the feasibility of intergenerational education

Intergenerational education is about mutual learning between people belonging to different generations. Intergenerational education includes collaborative learning, learning from each other, learning about each other, learning through interactional and intergenerational relations.

Intergenerational education can take a variety of forms, both formal and informal, regular, systematic and spontaneous. This type of education takes place within the family, neighborhood, amongst friends, or at work (e.g. at the university level it could be the master-disciple relationship), etc. Intergenerational education is also implemented in projects undertaken jointly by people belonging to different generations (e.g. intergenerational volunteering). In Poland, there is an increasing number of specially designed forms of intergenerational education (including gatherings, shared book readings, drama, art, computer, or cooking workshops, DIY classes, cultural, tourist, or regional education). These formal activities take place in kindergartens and all kinds of schools. April 29 is celebrated as the European Day of Solidarity between Generations (as established by the European Commission in 2009), which involves intergenerational meetings held at schools. Intergenerational educational forms are being created at universities, for example, in March 2013, the Intergenerational University

¹²³ Sto sposobów na dobrą jakość życia seniora, „Na Temat” 2005, nr 2:8.

“Omega” in Kujawy and Pomorze University in Bydgoszcz was established, and in the spring of 2013, appropriate measures have been taken to establish the University of All Generations at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. There is already an Academic Circle of Gerontologists (organizing integration and educational meetings for seniors and intergenerational seminars regarding gerontological issues). The increase in the number of formal initiatives related to intergenerational education in Poland can probably be contributed to the formulation and implementation of policy on seniors in our country as well as activities undertaken within the Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations (announced by the European Union in 2012), and the creation of many possibilities to take action concerning the elderly, financed through various projects (e.g. the European Social Fund).

Intergenerational activities under the project entitled “The Intergenerational Activity Academy - Experience Linking Generations” are an example of formal intergenerational education. On the basis of the decision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy – the project received a subsidy from the Governmental Programme for the Social Activity of the Elderly in the years 2012-2013. The Academy was established at Primary School No. 3 in Olsztyn. Classes of an intergenerational education are carried out by members of the Association “Three”, functioning in the school, and more specifically by the teachers of early childhood education classes, and by the author of this article (who is the mother of pupils of this school and as an employee of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, dealing with the problems of gerontology, and who has expressed her desire to join the association and to carry out the project dealing with intergenerational education). Students of the Academy are individuals who are at least 60 years old as well as primary school children aged 6 to 12. The project also includes volunteers, such as parents of the pupils and students of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. The main objective of the project is to encourage the elderly to take part in social activities and strengthen the intra- and intergenerational integration. The forms and the objectives include regular Saturday dealing with integration and education. The classes start simultaneously yet separately for each age group, i.e. with lectures for people in the late phase of adulthood (relating to various forms of activity) and mobility activities for children. Then there are the intergenerational workshops (including cooking, music, art, theatre, literature, exercising), requiring the cooperation of children and seniors; the meetings always end with the presentation of joint work created during the workshops. In addition to the Saturday schedule, the participants also take part in cultural events (such as theatre performances or concerts at the Philharmonic) and tourist events (e.g. they went to a farm where they had a bonfire, horse-drawn carriage rides and danced to live folk music).

The benefits of participation in intergenerational education

The positive effects of intergenerational education are of both individual and social dimensions. In terms of individual dimension, all participants benefit from this form of education, regardless of their age. The analysis of the empirical data made by the author of the article was obtained through observations of the participants conducted during lectures within the project, during informal meetings, and through an analysis of discussions conducted during the workshop, cultural outings and tourist events, as well as through the results of two surveys conducted among students of the Academy and the analysis of written feedback – all these prove that both children and the elderly benefit from participating in the classes offered by the Academy. The analysis of the surveys shows that both seniors and children are happy to participate in the event, in which there is interaction between adults and children and they all get satisfaction from activities during classes. They believe that they have acquired new knowledge, skills, and gained new experiences. Older people have a feeling that thanks to the Academy their circle of friends has widened, they recognize the benefits of integration and intergenerational solidarity. Integration and educational activities also trigger the greater desire of the elderly to manifest various forms of activity. Seniors are especially interested in taking recreational and physical activities, mental and educational activities as well as cultural, social and artistic ones. The fact that they have increased their motivation for taking on active lifestyles is also reflected through the fact that some of them engage in additional projects (such as voluntary activities involved in preparing several attractions entitled “Tent in Retro Style” during Family Days in Olsztyn) and participate, at their own initiative, in other educational activities (two ladies representing the Academy gave lectures during the National Scientific Seminar entitled “Late adulthood - taboo subjects”). All seniors surveyed recognized the advantages of intergenerational meetings, which were held in the Academy (for the kids the most important ones are: cooperation in mixed age groups, the stimulation of interests; children learn a lot from older people and form close relationships with them, children learn to respect the elderly, the intergenerational integration takes place; when it comes to adults the benefits include: the exchange of experiences and knowledge, views, interesting information about the various forms of activity, about the dimensions of life one usually does not think about, i.e. the therapeutic effects of nature, new friendships, joint actions, positive emotions, time pleasantly spent, new ideas on how to spend leisure time during that phase (old age), as well as the realization that even now one can still play with children, have a conversation with them and reminisce on his or her childhood). The analysis of other data indicates that children become more courageous in dealing with the elderly, and that they admire the knowledge and skills of the seniors. On the other hand, the older people feel needed by the representatives of younger generations, they become aware of their own resources (knowledge of specific topics, skills, interests and passions, talents and abilities), they feel appreciated, they leave their houses more often and do more for themselves, they also have a greater joy of life and more vitality. It is worth noting that the intergenerational education benefits also apply to

volunteers (school pupils, students, parents of children enrolled in the Academy), and activity leaders who are happy to participate in further activities, appreciating the knowledge and skills of all participants and the manners presented by the elderly. Contact with intergenerational groups is also a great source of educational and scientific inspiration for tutors.

To summarize the content regarding the intergenerational effects of such education, both personal and individual, it is worth noting that this form of education helps to illustrate or explore the potential capabilities of people of all ages (the young and the old can share their life experiences, their knowledge and skills), a better understanding of the needs of a given generation and the social needs of both the youngsters and the elderly (including the need to be recognized, the need to be needed), activation of people of all ages in various spheres of life, the acquisition of the habit of spending leisure time in the most rational way possible; broadening horizons, creating the ability to view things from a different perspective, the acquisition of knowledge and skills in many areas, including in the field of gerontological education, acquisition of local managerial, communicational, integrational, and organizational skills. All this undoubtedly helps to achieve good quality of life by all participants of this kind of education, regardless of their age.

In the social dimension, in terms of the intergenerational dialogue, through the activities of an intergenerational education there comes a time for a better mutual understanding of people representing various generations, understanding between people of different ages, shaping beneficial intergenerational relationships based on integration and solidarity and, consequently, leads to an increase in social integration and intergenerational solidarity (Grzybek, 2010; Podemska-Kałuża, 2010; Zych, 2001). Intergenerational education also contributes to changing negative stereotypes of various age groups, promoting a positive image of people belonging to different generations, shaping positive attitudes towards people of all ages, promoting the perception of the different phases of life as a natural stage of human life, preventing social exclusion, promoting independence in people of all ages, their activity and responsibility for themselves and their life quality, and promotion of noticing inherent resources in oneself, regardless of his or her age.

The conditions of intergenerational education

Intergenerational education happens mostly naturally, without restraints. However, if we undertake the formal implementations of intergenerational education, we should follow particular rules. These rules are mostly in line with the rules in place when working with any group. But we must remember that in the case of intergenerational education it is a group of people of all ages, representing a diverse community, not only in terms of age, but also their knowledge, skills, experiences, habits, values or the degree of physical and mental fitness.

The basic principle of the implementation of intergenerational education is to ensure that appropriate interpersonal communication, including the creation

of conditions enabling the participants to have an intergenerational dialogue, based on understanding, tolerance and kindness. The members of various generations need to be inspired in order to cooperate in mutually planned and implemented activities. To make interpersonal communication easier, we should first establish the rules to be followed later during the first meeting.

Any actions within the intergenerational education should begin with the identification of resources inherent in individuals representing various generations. It is worth creating the so-called "information bank", containing data on the participants (their knowledge, skills, interests, passions, and abilities). At the same time we must also obtain information about the expectations and needs of the participants.

It is also of great importance to ensure mutual understanding of all the participants. Here, the advantages of classes in pedagogy of play could be of advantage. Activity through play has many positive effects on people of all ages, it makes it easy to familiarize oneself with other participants.

The topics offered in-class to various generations should be interesting for both youngsters and the elderly. It should be ensured that each participant can actively participate in the meetings. Interesting scenarios for all classes to allow any person to present their own resources should be designed. A detailed diagnosis of the needs, expectations and capabilities of the participants would make it a lot easier to implement this principle. Each class participant should evaluate classes in an intergenerational education. Such evaluation should include what participants liked and what they did not, which values of intergenerational activities have been recognized by the recipients of the classes and what, in their opinion, should be modified and how the classes could be improved.

Conclusions and proposals

In order for the representatives of various generations to develop their skills throughout their lives, they need each other, which derives from the need to integrate and use resources inherent in the people belonging to those generations. There are many different benefits coming from participating in intergenerational education for representatives of all generations, which, in effect contribute to the enrichment of each participant in the education, regardless of their age. This education also brings positive effects in terms of social integration, particularly intergenerational solidarity, thus contributing to the popularization and implementation of the idea proposed since the turn of the century of a "society for all ages". It is therefore necessary to popularize the idea of such education, emphasize the advantages of this education and pursue as many different forms of intergenerational education as possible as part of the institutions and organizations belonging to all sectors of social life, especially to the realm of science, culture, recreation and tourism. At last, it is worth mentioning that intergenerational education can also be implemented as a part of religious life and the religious practices associated with it.

Prevention of Social Exclusion of Older People

Introduction

In accordance with the interpretation predominant in countries of the European Union, social exclusion 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 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 exclusion of older people

From the Report On Social Development - Poland 1999, 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 age¹²⁴ is menaced by poverty and various handicaps¹²⁵. In the light of the next Report in 2008 every tenth Pole

¹²⁴ In 2011 people aged 60 and more made 19.1%, and those aged 65 and more 13.5% of the total population, GUS, 2011, *Statistical Yearbook*, Warsaw 2012: 650-677.

¹²⁵ UNDP Report, 1999. Towards Dignified Active Old Age. Report About Social Development Poland 1999, UNDP, Warsaw 1999.

in the retirement age had income below the poverty line, and the threat of poverty grew proportionally to age¹²⁶.

Exclusion 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 centres, in tourist offices, in theatres, cafes, restaurants, in media, in private and outpatient health clinics, and even in shops and services is 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 psychical, 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. Its constant forecasting in the course of gerontological analyses, interviews and evaluations (Trafiałek, 2002:179-196) 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, competence reinforcement and co-operation on all the possible levels of public dialogue.

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 centres, 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 centres, commonly defined as the "Universities of the Third Age".

There are 257 such centres in the United Kingdom, with membership of over 40,000 (in 218 centres in England alone); in France the number of centres 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

¹²⁶ Report 2008, *Social and Legal Status of Polish Senior Citizens Against the Background of European Social Policy Programmes For Elderly Persons*. Report of the Team for Elderly Persons, Programme PHARE Access-Macroproject, Warsaw 2008: 6.

of the Third Age (AIUTA) listed over 1200 Universities of the Third Age in Europe alone (Halicka, Halicki, 1999:24; Czerniawska, 1999:308).

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. 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 favours breaking a negative stereotype of old age characterized by attitudes based on claims. Education centres and open universities which operate in England and Wales as well as open universities treat adult education as an efficient social movement which 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 centres function for seniors, and all of them apart from performing the educational function, have an integrative character. They include popular universities, training centres, academies for seniors and institutions of higher education open for everybody (Halicki, 2000:52-110). 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% are complete and functional illiterate people, and in the age range above 50 years over 80% of the population has only elementary education) – this population is treated as a priority group receiving special care of the authorities of all ranks. Educational institutions carry out a number of special educational projects, but the highest priority is attributed to initiatives which serve the development local community and the promotion of individuals. Many programmes 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 (GUS, 2010: 615; Czerniawska, 1996).

Elderly people are treated in Italy as the rock of experience, tradition and universal values. Of a 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 own 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 a 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 social exclusion 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 a 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 185 centres 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. The centres 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 programmes and they enjoy a 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 psychological 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 (Halicki, 2000). 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 which 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 of senility, exclusion, handicap and lack of any perspectives (*"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 endeavour to socialize the aging process, to 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. In countries with rich traditions of varied adult education one can clearly notice an endeavour 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 an 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 draw conclusions from their experience.

Global Aging and Social, Cultural and Educational Needs of Elderly People: A Challenge for the Third Age Universities

*Europe is becoming a continent of old people
in old houses and old ideas
Albert Sauvy (1898–1990)*

The end of the past and not easy century is a time of remarkable acceleration of globalization, namely the trend that involves “the spread of similar phenomena, irrespective of the geographical context and the degree of economic advancement of the region. Globalization leads to the convergence of the image of the world as a homogeneous whole of interrelated economic elements and common consumer-type culture. [...] The negative consequence of globalization is the growing segregation and exclusion of many social groups from the mainstream of economic and cultural development. Globalization equally unites and divides.” (*Encyklopedia nowej generacji*, 2008:249). This dissonance of globalization expressed Zygmunt Bauman (b.1925), saying: “Globalization is a name for a love–hate relationship, mixing attraction with repulsion: love that lusts for proximity, mixed with hate yearns for distance” (Bauman, 2012:142).

Social anthropologists, for example, Christine L. Fry (b. 1947) pay a special attention to such consequences of globalization in the modern world as increasing social polarization and homogenization of culture, relocation of everyday life, universal education in the sphere of skills and knowledge, with a clear crossing of not only borders and continents, but age, the spread of electronic media and the dominance of popular culture (Fry, 2005). Important consequences of globalization for the elderly are especially difficulties to adapt to a world in which the dominant culture and the cult of youth and beauty count; intellectual and physical fitness as well as aging and old age become a cultural product.

The situation of an aging individual in the process of globalization is so difficult that it can be observed today a particular dictate of youth culture, which recently drew the attention of the film director and screenwriter Andrzej Saramonowicz (b.1965), who said: “Youth – and consequently, its inherent freshness, vigour and beauty – has become a supreme value. Any person who is no longer

young (no matter how he or she tries to fight against old age) feels more and more acutely that he or she is worse. [...] I shall repeat it once again: all this is associated with the totalitarian dictate of youth. It has become a quasi-religion not to have wrinkles. So when a contemporary individual recognizes that his or her physicality is degraded, he or she moves to the camp second-class citizens"¹²⁷. Prevention of aging and education in old age has thus become a complex of normal and natural actions in order to defend oneself against the above-mentioned dictate of youth, which in turn may – although not necessarily – lead to exclusion and social isolation of people crossing the shadow line...

Examples of global demographic problems of the modern world can be, amongst others, aging of the population, not only in developed countries but also in the developing ones, as well as the disturbing demographic forecasts and the social inclusion of the "outgoing generation". The modern world begins to be referred to as "shaded in grey", having in mind the growing number of grey-haired seniors.

According to the Polish economist Danuta Hübner (b.1948): "Ageing is not just – as some believe – the problem of European pension systems. The spirit of the aging population decreases. It becomes less enterprising, less enthusiastic, less innovative, more inclined to pessimism"(Hübner, 2006).

Sedar Sayan (b.1964) predicts that within the next half a century the population aged 60 and over will grow tripled in the world – from 629 million in 2000 to almost two billion in 2050 (Sayan, 2002). What is more, double aging begins to emerge; namely, the demographic phenomenon involving not only the increase in the percentage of people aged 60 or 65 years, but also the increase in the subpopulation of the percentage of the elderly and very old people, over 75 or 80 years old. Demographic forecasts point to a significant increase in the coming years of the subpopulation of persons over 90 and 100 years old. The 21st century is sometimes referred to as the "century of centenarians", but – to quote old folk wisdom – "The point is not to live to one hundred years, but the point is to remember how old you are." It is a serious problem of the overall health condition and care for that generation. It is forecast that in Europe within the next 15 years (2010–2025) the subpopulation of people aged 80 and over will increase from the current 21.5 million to 34.8 million, i.e. an increase of more than 60%, and in the mid 21st century there will be 57.4 million people in such advanced age in Europe (Zych, 2010:124).

The dramatic decline in fertility rates and mortality in many countries leads to a zero rate of growth of population and the threat of depopulation, i.e. decrease in population; for example, Poland is already in the zone of limited generation substitution – the structure of the Polish population is also changing with respect of age due to a variable number of births (alternating cyclical demographic lows and highs). After 2010 people born during the baby boom of the 1950s began to enter the post-production age. It would not be a problem if this phenomenon was accompanied by a high number of births, but in the current demographic situation the burdening of the economically active population the

¹²⁷ A. Saramonowicz, *Facet lubi patrzeć na gładkie*. Robert Taborski was talking to Andrzej Saramonowicz. "Wysokie Obcasy" 2010, No. 36.

post-productive age group is particularly high, which can cause serious problems with future pensions and securing an adequate number of economically active people for the needs of the developing national economy. Furthermore, due to easier access to health care, higher quality of life and better conditions of civilization, life expectancy is significantly prolonged, which is an asset, but at the same time, it will also increase the family and social burden due to old age.

Global aging is also becoming a major challenge for contemporary lifelong education and social systems that are aimed and/or designed to satisfy the changing social, cultural and educational needs of the outgoing generation.

The Spanish painter and printmaker Francisco de Goya (1746–1828) left many self-portraits, of which one – located in the Prado Museum in Madrid – deserves a special attention. It is the portrait of a grey-bearded old man emerging from or vanishing in the darkness, supported by two sticks. It has a significant title: *Aún aprendo – I'm still learning*. The portrait, or rather a self-portrait, was drawn by Goya with natural black chalk when he turned eighty. Thus, it is never too late to learn, although sometimes learning in old age may be bitter, or perhaps education should be infinite. Education understood in a most comprehensive way can satisfy many needs of aging and elderly people.

The system of human needs changes in the course of human life, but the foundations of their hierarchy are the basic natural needs, among them the most basic physiological, instinctive or biological needs, such as the need to satisfy hunger and thirst, the need for activity, but also the need for sleep, recreation, holiday, as well as sexuality that appears during adolescence and it is initially caused by a storm of hormones but later it develops into a need for the heart. This group of needs protects human existence and survival in the biological sense, and failing to provide for them can lead to stress, personality disintegration, physical collapse and even death.

According to the classical concept of Abraham Maslow's (1908–1970) hierarchical structure of needs, when the physiological needs are well met, then there is a new set of higher needs, known as psychological or social needs, among them the need for security (certainty, stability, support, care, freedom from fear, anxiety and chaos, structure, order, law and borders, a strong protector, etc.), needs for love, affection, respect and belonging (human contact, social interaction and communication, a positive recognition by others, autonomy and independence, respect for privacy, but also a need for success which all raise self-esteem), and finally cognitive needs, such as the desire for knowledge and understanding, and aesthetic needs (order, symmetry, completing the activities of a system and structure). Unsatisfied needs of this group can lead to cognitive and emotional deprivation, alienation, isolation, and above all to a state of frustration, while realization of these needs is a step towards the emergence of the highest and most personal needs, such as the need to make sense of life, self-realization, creativity, the need to do good and the desire to live a real life (Maslow, 2006; Kalvach, 2004).

In satisfying the psychological, social, cultural, educational, as well as existential and spiritual needs of the outgoing generation a great number of educational, religious and governmental institutions, and even the media, can

participate. For example, senior centres, resorts and clubs, open and third age universities, reading clubs for adults and their variations, such as the Television University of the Third Age (Katowice), the Academy of Digital Competences (Lublin), the Academy 50+ (Poznań), or Television Senior Club (Wrocław), can be very instrumental.

However, the social movement of the universities of the third age has a special role to play. It was launched in 1973 by the French lawyer Pierre Vellas (1924–2005), and two years later, Halina Szwarc (1923–2002) transferred this idea to Poland. UTA is a kind of learning community, organized by and for people who want to be active in retirement. This form of the education of in aging and elderly people plays an important role in gerontological prophylaxis and rehabilitation because the purpose of the “University of Leisure Time” is to keep up the spirit of the elderly, involve them in valuable and noble activities and improve their living conditions through mental, intellectual and physical activation, include the elderly in the system of permanent education, as well as teach the “art of life” in the third age through implementation of gerontological prophylaxis (Zych, 2010:195-196).

When Vellas created in Toulouse the first such facility for aging and elderly people its participants were individuals who remembered the First World War, the Wall Street crash in 1929, the great economic crisis in the seemingly beautiful 1930s, and also the horrors of World War II. However, soon the UTA in Poland will admit people from the generation of the Polish anti-Communist riots in December 1970 and the Polish “Solidarity”, brought up in the era of the Internet, satellite communications, advanced technology. They are highly educated and have much higher aspirations and needs, the academic community should be prepared for this huge cultural leap. They may not be satisfied by traditional academic lectures, even those delivered by outstanding professors, supported by media presentations, not to mention courses of creating batik fabrics and embroidery courses, or even a course of creating fancy tatting patterns, recreational gymnastics and rehabilitation with “slow dance for health”, or tai chi, and aerobics, and the courses of salsa and flamenco ... It will be necessary to be a retirement planning policy at the pre-retirement stage. It will be necessary to develop for the aging and elderly people programmes of legal counselling, advice on consumer and claim issues, and finally provision of know-how of new information and media technologies and media, including computer use, Internet, e-book reader and e-mail application. We should not forget about the important personality competences – I mean not only the development of assertiveness and empathy, the ability to accept elderly people as they are in order not to leave them alone and not let them feel lonely. It is also of paramount importance to develop internal self-control in elderly people. And finally, it is the human problem of the formation of effective strategies to cope not only with the loss of beauty and health, disability and decrepitude, but above all with the most painful loss of the nearest people with whom one often lived almost half a century...

When I attended a few years ago an interesting seminar in Lubin near Wrocław, I heard with some surprise information announced with some pride

that in one of the third-age universities one has to wait a few years for a place, one is expected to pass a qualifying interview, and that UTA is not open for everyone. Thus, this form of education of the aging and elderly is becoming more and more elitist, and despite the existence of near 400 third-age universities, most of the aging Poles – especially those living in villages and small towns – have no possibility of participation by their own choice in this form of lifelong education.

What is worse, this beautiful idea is subjected – to a large extent – to justifiable criticism. Wiesław Łukaszewski (b. 1940) says that “universities of the third age are an embarrassment. They are ghettos of pensioners who cannot spoil anything anymore, so let them study for free a knowledge that is not useful for the young. Let them paint unwanted pictures or make vases of clay [...]. We should not call them universities because it’s a hoax. What kind of university is it? What kind of courses do they offer? This is just an unappetizing game of appearances. If we really want to give old people an equal chance for education, let each city sponsor a few of them a course of real study in a real university. Give them a chance to test their intellectual capacity, which is an amazing experience. This is sometimes the case in Sweden and the USA. There, in university classrooms, 70-year olds and 18-year-olds sit together in the same classrooms. They are fellow students. In Poland a measure of success of our old *students* is making clay pots. Because something has to be done, you have to keep old folks busy so they stop bothering and don’t want anything from you. And when they start thinking too much, then we tell them to make another tapestry. Or we let them make a woolen beret. For a grandson, of course, not, God forbid, for an exhibition”¹²⁸.

The idea of third-age universities enthusiastically adopted in the 1970s needs a critical reevaluation in the early twenty-first century, and it should also be pointed out that new educational opportunities for people entering late adulthood should be developed.

We must agree with Marvin Formosa that most educational programmes for aging and elderly people offered by the universities of the third age (UTA), do not perform the basic function which is meeting the needs of elderly people, but are they addressed only to the “social elite” (Formosa, 2002:77-78). Elitism of Polish UTA is clearly evidenced by the following facts: in the 1999/2000 academic year this form of education in Poland included about 7,200 people aged 60 years and above, whereas the subpopulation of people in this age group in Poland in 2000 was 6 million 450 thousand, so the UTA in Poland covered only 112 per mille of the subpopulations. It should be added that out of 25 Polish UTA¹²⁹ operating in 2000, as many as 20 were located in academic centres, and

¹²⁸ W. Łukaszewski, *Kiedy jeżdżę na rolnkach, smarkacze krzyczą: Dziadek do piachu!* Dorota Wodecka was talking to Prof. Wiesław Łukaszewski, „Gazeta Wyborcza” 2008, No. 268.

¹²⁹ In recent years there has been an expansive growth of third age universities in Poland, expressed in sixteenfold increase in their number. Currently there are near 400 UTA, including the youngest institution, such as: Lower Silesian University of the Third Age at the University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław (2007), UTA in Chrzanów, Morąg, Nowa Ruda, Nowy Targ, Starachowice, Wodzisław (2007), UTA in Kłodzko, Mogilno, Mysłowice, Rawicz and Sokółka (2008), the Academy of Seniors at the School of Information Technology in Szczecin (2008), UTA at Wrocław University of Economics (2008), UTA at the Technical University of

most participants of these institutions had higher education (37.6%) or secondary education (57.3%), i.e. UTA was focused on the "social elite", which includes every nine hundredth person over the age of 60 years, coming from big cities, and preferably with higher or secondary education (Zych, 2013). Universities of the third age as educational facilities for aging and elderly people are not subject to any control or accreditation, and no one really supervises their programmes and teaching methods or courses.

Another important issue is the feminization of UTA, while "programmes are characterized by an absolute indifference to feminist gerontological issues. The programme reflects the broad concepts, principles and priorities of men – as a result we have a situation where old women study about the society from the male point of view."(Formosa, 2002:78).

The new educational opportunities of aging and elderly people are evidenced by the following facts: at the age of 84 Maria Falkowska (1906-1998) is awarded a doctorate in Education at the Institute for Educational Research in Warsaw; 80-year-old Kazimiera Wójcikowska (b. 1923), so far the oldest student of Warsaw University of Technology, completed a master's degree at the Faculty of Civil Engineering in June 2003. She defended her thesis with a very good result. As well as, Bogumiła Antkowiak-Manc (b. 1936), in July 2012 completed a B.A. cultural studies degree at the Humanistic-Manager Higher School "Milenium" in Gniezno. Should we not therefore consider to extend higher education also for the "leaving" generation, which is often referred, not without reason, the modern "leisure class"? This generation might earn actual skills and qualifications instead of honorary diplomas.

Finally, there is an important issue of the education of pre-retirement people, who are not old yet, but not young either. I have in mind education in the field of law, economics, linguistics, gerontology, geriatrics and health promotion, which may be a preliminary step to the gerontological and geriatric prevention.

It's time for conclusion: if we are serious about fulfilling the basic mental, social, cultural and educational needs of the "outgoing generation", the current model of the university of the third age requires far-reaching changes and reforms, especially the spread of this idea on the European scale and a comprehensive programme and organization in order to satisfy such important human desires as the need to make sense of life, self-realization, creativity, do good, and to live an authentic, not simulated life in spite of old age, which is often seen as a painful shadow in arduous everyday reality.

Translated from the Polish by Andrzej Diniejko

Radom (2008), UTA in Siemianowice, Ząbkowice, Żary and UTW at the Collegium Civitas in Warsaw (2009), Karkonoski UTA in Kamienna Góra (2010), UTA in Bieruń, Bielsko Podlaskie and Zagnańsk (2011), UTA in Dzierżoniów, Gołuchów and Pszczyna (2012), Gdańsk Academy of Seniors or Psychological UTA in Sopot (2012) – author's note.

@ctive Senior-Effective Initiatives to Overcome Barriers in ICT Use

Introduction: European Context And ICT Policies

A major challenge faced by European societies is the progressive ageing of the population, including the risk of a growing gap between generations. Especially so, as fast-developing new technologies increase the distance between the younger and the older generations. Using ICT is also a privileged means of learning while creating benefits across different generations, bringing young people and seniors together and tackling the digital divide¹³⁰. But older people do not understand or use technology in the same way as younger generations do, because they grew up in a simpler, electro-mechanical era.

Nowadays, the aging population has become a demographic trend of the majority of developed societies, such as Japan, the USA, and Europe. Not all countries have reached the same stage in the transition and at the start of the 21st century the highest proportions of older people are observed in European populations. By 2050, it is to be expected that more than one quarter of the European population will be aged 65 and over. The fastest growing segment of the older population are the 'oldest old' or people aged 80 and over¹³¹. So it seems that just Information and Communication Technologies can contribute to the improvement of quality of life of the elderly. The Internet will be very well-suited to the needs of the elderly, as a fairly sedentary population with considerable leisure time, especially for social networking, hobbies, and services such as the home delivery of goods.

Internet access and use is widespread amongst the EU population. In the EU27, more than three quarters of households had access to the internet in 2012, compared with just under half in 2006¹³².(Euostat,2012). The proportion of households who have a broadband internet connection has increased more

¹³⁰ ICT FOR SENIORS'AND INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING, Projects funded through the Lifelong Learning Programme from 2008 to 2011, p.5.

¹³¹ EU RESEARCH ON SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES Population Policy Acceptance Study – The Viewpoint of Citizens and Policy Actors Regarding the Management of Population Related Change DIALOG Final report HPSE-CT-2002-00153, p.55.

¹³² Internet access and use in 2012, EUROSTAT, STAT/12/185, 18 December 2012.

significantly. In 2012, 72% of EU27 households had access to the internet via a broadband connection, compared with 30% in 2006.

These data published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, represent only a small part of the results of a survey on usage of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in households and by individuals in the EU27 Member States.

Table 1. Households with internet access and broadband connection, %

| | Internet access | | | Broadband connection | | |
|--------|-----------------|------|------|----------------------|------|------|
| | 2006 | 2009 | 2012 | 2006 | 2009 | 2012 |
| EU27 | 49 | 66 | 76 | 30 | 57 | 72 |
| Poland | 36 | 59 | 70 | 22 | 51 | 67 |

Source: Eurostat

Broadband internet access enables higher speed when browsing and performing activities over the internet. In 2012, in every Member State at least half of households had a broadband connection. Sweden (87%) registered the highest share of broadband connections, followed by Denmark and Finland (both 85%), the Netherlands (83%), Germany (82%) and the United Kingdom (80% in 2011).

As regards internet users' activities, we can say that the most common online activities are sending and receiving e-mails as well as finding information about goods or services (89% and 83%, respectively, of those who had used the internet within the last three months) in the EU27 in 2012. Other activities are also widespread among EU27 internet users: 61% read online news, 54% used internet banking services, 52% posted messages to social media and 50% used services related to travel. In 2012, creating websites or blogs was much less common, even if 9% of internet users already undertook this activity.

Table 2. Selected activities of internet users, 2012

| | % of internet users in the last 3 months having used internet for: | | | | |
|--------|--|------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Reading online news, newspapers | Internet banking | Posting messages to social media | Travel and accommodation services | Creating a website or blog |
| EU27 | 61 | 54 | 52 | 50 | 9 |
| Poland | 48 | 51 | 68 | 20 | 5 |

Source: Eurostat

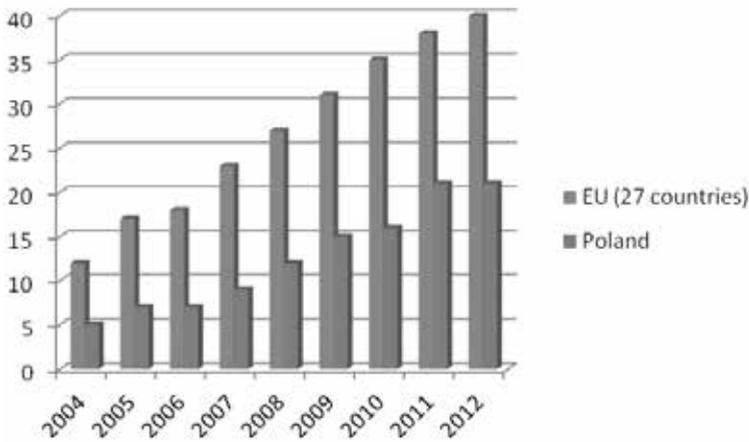


Figure 1. Individuals frequently using the Internet

Source: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&plugin=1&language=-en&p-code=tin00092>

As regards individual, economic and social challenges by demographic trends, it is clear that ICT can make key contributions to an independent living of elderly people. This refers to the following points in particular:

- ICT can reduce high expenses for health and care services,
- ICT has the potential to provide individual solutions and thus meet individual needs,
- ICT has the potential to improve living standards,
- ICT opens new business opportunities (Gabner, Conrad, 2012:5).

Internet as an open net is an open forum for all kinds of activity. That is why people find the internet such an incredible place to explore, experiment, and experience. That is why there are so many great online services for all to enjoy. But on the other hand, regular internet use and use amongst disadvantaged groups has increased. There is a significant portion of the European population who are still failing to benefit from the internet and ICT related opportunities (Roberts, Finnegan, Small, 2012:5). If non-users are the main problem, then the elderly become a significant problem group. There are, however, some serious socio-technical arguments, which demonstrate why the elderly lack sufficient motivation to participate.

ICT can help elderly individuals improve their quality of life, stay healthier, live independently for longer, and counteract reduced capabilities that are more prevalent with age. ICT can enable them to remain active at work or in their community¹³³.

¹³³ Overview of the European strategy in ICT for Ageing Well, October 2010, pp. 2-3.

Technical barriers to ICT adoption and use for older people

The ICT needs of older people are very heterogeneous and there is a broad range of existing and emerging ICT-based products and services that have relevance for meeting these various needs and objectives¹³⁴. Up to 15% of the population across the European Union has a disability, such as a visual, hearing, speech, cognitive, or motor impairment¹³⁵ and the SEE countries can expect to have a similar proportion.

The Information Society must share its benefits with the whole society, including people who find it more difficult to use new technologies, such as those with a disability and the elderly. The European Commission is promoting “eAccessibility” aimed at providing people with disabilities and elderly people with access to ICTs on an equal basis with others. This includes removing the barriers encountered when trying to access and use ICT products, services and applications. eAccessibility is about overcoming the technical barriers that people with disabilities and others, such as elderly people, experience when seeking to participate on equal terms in the Information Society. No single EU directive is dedicated to eAccessibility. At the highest international level, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹³⁶, which was ratified and came into force in 2008, is the relevant legal context. But actions are spread across areas such as *Television without Frontiers*¹³⁷ (for sub-titling), the *Copyright Directive*¹³⁸ (for copyright exemptions), and the *Telecoms Framework*¹³⁹ (for assistive technologies). eAccessibility is also covered by policy and in terms of programmatic support, guidelines and benchmarking exist.

There are at least five reasons justifying early actions in the area of eAccessibility¹⁴⁰:

- It is worthwhile in its own right, improving access to services for people many of whom are already facing obstacles and are even marginalized. In this sense it helps fulfill the promise of the Information Society to reduce rather than increase the disadvantage. Conversely, insufficient effort in this area is likely to further marginalize these groups.
- The improvement of access to services, public and private, for such a significant proportion of the population opens significant market/

¹³⁴ ICT & Ageing, European Study on Users, Markets and Technologies Final Report. January, 2010.

¹³⁵ EU Staff working paper on e-Accessibility, http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/docs/access/comm_2008/staffwp.pdf

¹³⁶ CONVENTION on the RIGHTS of PERSONS with DISABILITIES, <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

¹³⁷ Television broadcasting activities: “Television without Frontiers” (TVWF) Directive, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/audiovisual_and_media/l24101_en.htm#AMENDINGACT

¹³⁸ Directive 2001/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2001 on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society

¹³⁹ Directive 2002/21/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 March 2002 on a common regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services (Framework Directive)

¹⁴⁰ UN Convention, EU Demands, Existing Instruments Workshop Documentation, p.2

sales opportunities, and can help the public service fulfill their remit in a cost-effective manner.

- By-products of designing in eAccessibility include improved access for able-bodied people in some circumstances; and it can reduce the cost of Web service development and enhance the prospects for migrating Web services onto new platforms such as mobile phones.
- The earlier an action is taken, the easier it is to plan eAccessibility into the development of e-Services and the lower the cost.
- Pursuing approaches that follow EU Guidelines and recommendations will assist in the convergence of the Information Society aspects of the EU and SEE countries.

But a primary barrier that older people face when trying to use the web is lack of familiarity with computers and the conventions used in computer software. The lack of knowledge about how to use a mouse, or about how menus work will act as a barrier to web use and the attempt to introduce this knowledge in the context of learning to use the web will dramatically increase the complexity of the concept being introduced: the web is itself a highly complicated environment with a range of conventions which should be learned separately from the more common computing conventions.

Simplified software interface for seniors

For a novice computer user of any age, but especially for elderly people, a typical user interface can be overwhelming. Even with a graphical user interface, it is not intuitively obvious what a person is supposed to do to open and read an e-mail message, create a document or file, or perform other common tasks. The user must recognize the status of the system and perform some kind of operation in order to make the system perform the desired function. When senior citizens utilize ICT services, they can find them difficult to use, owing to either their aging or their limited experience and knowledge. Such difficulties also depend on the sort of user interface provided by the service. It is therefore important to provide a sophisticated user interface designed taking account of aging and limited experience and knowledge in order to make the service easy to use by senior citizens.

Elderly people who grew up without the benefit of having computers may feel that computers are not meant for their use or relevant to them. The technological revolution was developed before the growth of this generation. Research concludes that elderly people find it difficult to use standard interface compare to the young. As a conclusion, for the full potential of technology to be useful for these people, the needs and requirements must be considered in designing the virtual environment (Shamsuddin, Lesk, Ugail, 2011:1).

It is impossible to put together a simple profile or to identify a single stereotypical elderly PC user because there is a great deal of diversity within the user group. Each elderly individual is unique and therefore requires different specifications for different applications and interfaces. A person's ability can vary

widely through time depending on factors like fatigue and illness . Researches suggests that poorly designed interfaces are a fundamental obstacle to digital inclusion and that elderly adults find it more difficult than their younger counterparts to use standard interfaces (Hunter,Sayers, McDaid, 2007).

Regarding designing good interface for specific group, designers should consider suitability of the software characteristics for general users and extend it to cope with limitation of specific users. From ALTEC-Project¹⁴¹, the researchers suggested a set of guidelines for the elderly user interface design following the list below.

1. Reduction of Complexity: Elements that are rarely used or not necessary should be removed with a view to simplicity of application.
2. Clear Structure of task: The starting point of tasks and every step should be easily recognized and understood.
3. Consistency of information: Avoid contradictions and inconsistencies of the arrangement of information.
4. Rapid and distinct feedback: Applications should continuously provide easily recognized feedback of success or failure of every action.

For example, drop-down menus and similar solutions are commonplace and only require a secondary thought from all users who have grown up in the digital age but complete novices, however such navigation procedures can be daunting for others. While some software products are moving away from drop-down menus and more toward a tabs orientation, such a layout is not necessarily less complex for any user. There are typically hundreds of options, even in basic Internet browsing or email software. Additionally, these programs are not static, as continual upgrades and updates are pushed and eventually required for users.

Thanks to the designing of a user-friendly interface to include the elderly, older people can remain living in their own homes for longer, keeping in touch with the outside world through, for example, Internet banking, shopping and email, and thus increase their sense of well-being and security.

Eldy seniors platform – removing barriers good practice

Eldy¹⁴² is a software that turns any standard computer to an easy-to use, intuitive and immediate interface that makes it easy to an write email, browse the web, chat, take part in a videoconference, write a document, etc. Its graphical user interface (GUI) has been designed to help users accomplish the most common tasks. The project was launched in the city of Vicenza (Italy) by a non-profit organization, the Eldy Association NGO, whose aim is to reduce the technological gap between young and older people. Eldy is distributed in 29 languages, for Windows, Linux and Mac. Eldy is also available for the Android tablet and television.

¹⁴¹ T. Phiriyapokanon; Is a big button interface enough for elderly users? Towards user interface guidelines for elderly users, p.18, <http://www.idt.mdh.se/utbildning/exjobb/files/TR1091.pdf>

¹⁴² http://www.eldy.eu/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/Eldy_english-infos_light.pdf

Eldy is an easy application, with a full range of functionalities:

- it is a pop3/imap client for eldy.org email but also any other email account,
- it has a particular browser with magnifier,
- it is a digital picture manager,
- it allows picture management and includes an easy text editor,
- it has a lively community in chat sections.



Figure 2. Eldy platform – an Italian version

In Eldy, fonts and buttons are bigger than usual. The software has distinct color contrast between the text and the background. Unnecessary buttons have been removed to make the software interface easier to use. Currently Eldy has 400.000 users worldwide and a large variety of versions, for localizing content or particular applications.

Eldy is both software, a social network, and a non-profit volunteer organization. The project aims to reduce the digital divide which prevents the elderly from using the Internet. Since the launch of the software, the elderly have been more included in our society. The Eldy Association has created a community based on ethical values, such as friendship and mutual support. It has provided the software and organized many training courses, but the biggest contribution to the creation of the Eldy community has come from volunteers, who have spent a huge amount of time helping each other and teaching other seniors how to use the software. Eldy NGO has collected huge experience in reducing the digital divide among seniors. Eldy has grown with small projects and large projects:

- libraries opened Eldy Kiosks (Public Access Points),

- many Regions/Provinces/Municipalities started e-inclusion projects with Eldy,
- schools started intergenerational projects with the Eldy-Tutor system,
- the Eldy van reached rural areas, distributing CDs and training seniors,
- a retirement house started managed lessons for learning Eldy.



Figure 3. Eldy platform – Polish version

Eldy is a non-profit organization with hundreds of volunteers, but also professional teachers, researchers, professional educators, IT engineers. Eldy has been used successfully in a large variety of e-inclusion projects. The approach permits a wider participation of seniors and people with disabilities in the life of the community, involving this category of people in a modern connection with public administration online services, making some daily tasks easier to accomplish¹⁴³.

The project has been launched in Poland, too, at Jan Kochanowski University. Two seniors groups took part in 10 one-hour computer sessions. They have never used a computer and the Internet before and they were between 63 and 75 years of age. Seniors started learning with Eldy platform that, in these circumstances, was the best solution. The software has a very easy interface for senior beginners, a large font, clear screen input into another option, such as a notepad, email, internet, chats, etc. without difficult pull-down menus. The seniors acknowledge the Eldy platform as the best application to start practicing the use of more advanced computer software in the future.

¹⁴³ Pupils introduce seniors to the web. SOCIAL AGENDA, April 2012, N° 29, p.17-18.

A new research concerning application interfaces for seniors is currently planned at Jan Kochanowski University. Another two seniors groups will take part in the study. I hope that the findings will be published in the near future.

Conclusion

ICT tools and applications are new for many older people in their role as learners, and for teachers who should be developing the learning opportunities for them. Attention should therefore be paid to developing tools and applications that provide learning opportunities that are easy to take up for everyone and benefit older people in the best possible ways.

It would seem intuitively obvious that there are many issues related to the design and layout of the user interface with regards to IT use by the elderly. As we advance in age, our eyesight diminishes and our manual dexterity deteriorates. Thus, it would seem readily apparent that a vendor of IT products would address such concerns. However, with some exceptions, this has not been the case. For the most part, computers and their associated peripheral devices are not designed with senior citizens in mind. This is true of both hardware and software components. On the hardware side, there are very small buttons and plugs/sockets for the associated equipment (e.g., printers, speakers, external drives, etc.) that can be difficult to see and manipulate by seniors. This implies that regular support will be required for this group as usage increases.

More research is needed to discover what others barriers are and how seniors could benefits from a new technology in the modern digital world.

S.IN.AP.S.I.: Soft Skills Development through a Multiplayer Virtual World

Introduction: Meaning and purpose of the project

The aim of this article is to describe S.IN.AP.SI¹⁴⁴, a specific learning model that is being developed within the European Project 'Leonardo'.

SINAPSI has an innovative and challenging purpose: to create a path of professional development, based mainly on e-learning technologies, able to guarantee a level of quality comparable to development paths made on site.

The project refers to the professional development of soft skills, or rather 'individual competences', that can be better defined as the 'intrinsic characteristics of individuals that determine the effectiveness of their performance regarding a certain task' (Boyatzis, 1982).

In recent years, the so-called competences-based approach has become a central theme in organizational development processes. Until recently, it was relatively easy to define the 'profile' of professional roles: "what would be expected from those who held a job" (the kind of knowledge that they had to have, the type of problems that they had to face, etc.). In a complex and globalized age as ours, in which the knowledge ages quickly and scenarios change with great rapidity, such clarity is disappearing. In other words, what we 'know' and what we 'do' can quickly lose their adaptive value by bringing out the importance of another kind of quality or better the importance of those meta-qualities that are the foundation of our relationship with reality and problems (Morin, 2000)¹⁴⁵.

That is why qualities such as initiative, critical approach towards information, ability to solve new problems or to manage conflicts, tend today to be regarded as a competitive advantage, a sort of intellectual capital possessed by the organizations¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁴ .SINAPSI, Interactive simulations for individual skills training

¹⁴⁵ According to E. (Morin, 200 (2000)), for example, training today has the task of 'supporting people in managing the sense of emptiness and inadequacy with respect to a world which is difficult to understand, and to help them to constantly renew their own way of approaching problems'.

¹⁴⁶ So as to be evaluated economically, helping to determine the value of a company, for example in cases of mergers or acquisitions.

Normally, development interventions dedicated to this kind of competences involve the use of considerable economic and organizational resources. As a consequence, large private organizations used to make these kinds of projects available only to people at a higher decisional level. Considering also the time of economical turbulence that the world is going through and, as a consequence, the decrease of average investments in development, the idea of e-learning courses opens, automatically, new perspectives, enabling one to reach business- and professional profiles that would be otherwise excluded. However, despite the clear opportunities offered by e-learning, the synthesis of new technologies and personal development is not at all defined and open, and in fact these are issues that the project is currently facing.

At first, reflections about the 'sense' and the 'value' of projects like SINAPSI comes to light. How the latter can (supposing they can) contribute to the 'educational challenge' posed to workers of today and tomorrow? What contribution can this kind of models provide to a company and a business world that is more and more 'liquid' (Bauman, 2006), where it is necessary to reconcile the need for continuous change and innovation, to ensure quality of life and rights of people?

The second kind of reflections regards instead the capacity of methodologies such as SINAPSI to 'support' activities, for example those related to development, rather complex from the relational and epistemological point of view. Considering that the quality of development paths is strongly influenced by the processes of communication among the actors involved, can an intervention carried out mostly through e-learning provide an adequate 'relational quality'? And, from the epistemological point of view, is it possible to make observations and inferences about personal characteristics from activities that take place in a virtual environment and then at a distance?

SINAPSI translates these questions into a project. Although it is not yet mature enough to provide a definitive synthesis, it is providing interesting results. After describing the architecture of the project, we will try to summarize main ideas that emerged.

Methodology and tools

The project includes a modular path that provides moments of diagnosis of the expertise level and moments of training dedicated to their 'upgrade'.

In the classroom, there will be moments dedicated to the sharing of objectives and methodologies and to the overall evaluation of activities undertaken by the participants, respectively at the beginning and at the end of the project. In addition to the moments on-site during the training phase, these are the only ones that will not be performed on-line; the 'heart' of the project, the part devoted to 'real' development, will be performed through e-learning.

The evaluation is done in two stages: the assessment of the skills will be carried out at the beginning of the path, while the identification of the progress will take place at the end. The steps to upgrade the skills are thought as learning modules dedicated to the training of specific skills on which we intend to work.

The methodology used for evaluation is borrowed from the so-called Assessment Center, an evaluation technique that, through different tools and multiple observers, is able to assess individual skills. One of the partners, the Italian Entropy Knowledge Network, uses this technique in classroom. Therefore, one of the problems that we are facing is how to translate that model into an online way that does not compromise the validity of the analysis.

The mean of the development modules training methodology includes at the beginning a moment on-site, with a purely educational character, in which categories and models of analysis of the competences are transferred to the participants. After this first moment, the on-line sessions commence in which the skills training will start. Participants are placed in a 3D virtual scenery in which they are asked to solve a certain task. The next step is the analysis of their performance and the identification of aspects of effectiveness and ineffectiveness.

This work aims to analyze the performance of the group, to identify 'ways to look at the problem' and alternative strategy solutions, triggering some sort of ability to 'reframe', the capability of critical analysis and redefinition of interpretive schemes and actions. In addition to a plenary analysis, the model provides each participant with individual feedbacks inspired by the methodology of 'coaching'.

Considering the methodological complexity described, a decisive role, with respect to the validity of the path, is played by the technologies used. From this point of view the project can count on an innovative model of relational dynamics simulation, developed by the "Istituto di Scienze e Tecnologie della Cognizione – CNR" as part of a previous European project called SISINE (for more details: www.nac.unina.it/sisine/). The 3D online platform is therefore the principal instrument through which the methods described above will be implemented, the instrument that is already being adapted and enhanced according to the specific needs of SINAPSI. A delicate role belongs to the other partners of the project: Dipartimento di Scienze Relazionali "G. Iacono" Federico II University of Naples, the French MF & Partners Consulting, and the Slovak NGO PDCS oz. In addition to the methodological and educational contributions, each of these partners will have to test the model in their country of reference, addressing different professional targets (professional training teachers and school staff in Italy; employees of small and medium-sized companies in France and Public Administration officers in Slovakia).

First considerations on SINAPSI

The ability to work on personal competences is one of the great challenges of the training of tomorrow, assuming also political and ethical implications and considering the impact of the work on the equilibrium of our society. The kickback of what we might call a lack of 'systemic view' (a typical personal competence of managerial roles) is now visible in the world economy. Only a generation of conscious and critical workers is potentially able to govern the economical and technological changes of the future.

The dynamism and flexibility of the labor market will, however, change some of the basic assumptions of the training that is destined to become a leading responsibility and an increasing demand by individuals rather than by companies.

Another element to consider is the fact that new generations will speak a different language from those of the recent past, influenced by technological innovations, communication and games.

It is based on this kind of considerations that the project first brings out, in their working group, the meaning and the importance of flexible and easy to access systems and development methodologies that are able to use new communication codes. In a context of "Liquid Modernity", these methodologies mean also greater autonomy, responsibility and 'power' of individuals in relation to their learning paths.

As regards the internal side of the project, it must be observed that the attempt to give an e-learning shape to the traditional development methodologies primarily means a revision of the categories of observation and judgment. To make sure that tools, such as SINAPSI, are effective, those who use them should be able to understand the meaning of behaviors 'acting out' in a virtual environment and to translate them into skills. Of course, working within such environments leads to a considerable loss of information compared to a situation in attendance. However, we must consider that in reality other instruments (tests and role-play, for example) provide partial indications. We do not want to underestimate the importance of factors such as non-verbal behavior, compared, for instance, to effective communication. Certainly, to appreciate complexity of this kind of skills, a technological 'jump' would be required. However, regarding the approach to problems or the decision-making style of individuals, in part of e-learning systems, the limits of 'representativeness' of the skills looks different. Indeed they make new and powerful tools available, in which you can include the ability to simulate dangerous or particularly complex situations. These are the kind of thoughts that are springing up within SINAPSI, considerations that will become areas of methodological focus and guidelines in the first trials of the model, expected in the coming months.

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BUTLER 2.0 an Adaptable E-Social and E-Health Technological Platform for Elderly People¹⁴⁷

Introduction

Taking into consideration current human relationships through the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is a reality. Our ways of meeting each other, relating to each other and communicating with each other have been redefined. ICTs offer speed, ease and richness of stimuli, all simultaneously, which would be very difficult to achieve using old traditional ways of relating to each other socially. The latter obviously have not been lost, but they have been reinvented and they will continue to be.

This technological revolution coincides with a demographic reality, characterized by the exponential increase of the number of elderly people (Kinsella, He, 2009). Both phenomena represent key subjects on the agendas of developed countries (Anastasiou, Quarrie, Boulous, 2009: 18-29; European Commission, 2012). On the one hand, the economic and social politics of the countries are turning to the ICTs in order to resolve current and future demands regarding health and wellbeing. On the other hand, generating an economic and social structure to assist a more aged population increasingly consumes more attention.

ICTs come up as resources that allow us to treat the elderly people's needs with the maximum quality possible, but at the same time, they mean economic costs are more manageable for the current and future economies. Furthermore, they offer the advantage of opening new market niches, based on services and products for elderly people (European Commission, 2009)

Currently, there are several ambitious projects linking ICTs and elderly population (Bierhoff, Nap, Rijnen, Wichert, 2012, European Commission, 2011). For

¹⁴⁷ This study was funded in part by Ministerio de Educación Ciencia Spain, Projects Consolidar-C (SEJ2006 4301/PSIC), "CIBER of Physiopathology of Obesity and Nutrition, an initiative of ISCIII" and Excellence Research Program PROMETEO (GeneralitatValenciana.Conselleria deEducación, 2008-157) and with the support of the Generalitat Valenciana (Santiago Grisolia FPI program).

example, the NAVIGA project¹⁴⁸ (Gachet-Páez, Aparicio, Buenaga, Padrón, 2012) is an open and adaptable platform whose main goal is to design and develop a technological platform that allows the seniors and people with disabilities to access the Internet and the Information Society. The PERSONA system (Perceptive spaces promoting independent ageing)¹⁴⁹ is aimed at empowering the elderly and supporting them in their homes to help them maintain their independence and quality of life. The system includes a technological platform that seamlessly links different product and services; its main goal is to help users to be autonomous, to increase their self-confidence and to increase their participation in the society. The Co-LIVING system¹⁵⁰ is based on an innovative social community network that integrates different mobile wireless ICT-based services focused on social interaction, context categories of Care and Wellness, Guidance and Mobility monitoring; GO-myLIFE¹⁵¹ is aimed at improving the quality of life of elderly people through the use of online social networks combined with mobile technologies. In a similar line, there are other projects more focused on enhancing independence, mobility and participation of the elderly in the society. One of them is the ENTRANCE project, focused on enhancing access to the internet and mobility through a terminal and a multimodal mobile interface to learn different activities (how to book e-tickets and vacation packages, a serious game to train the seniors to improve their spatial competences and their ability to navigate indoors and outdoors, etc.). Finally, HOST¹⁵² is aimed at adapting smart technologies for self-service to seniors in social housing. Its main goal is to provide easy-to-use technologies and services in social housing flats to allow a better quality of communication and better access to package services to the elderly.

As it can be seen, the technologies are increasingly more prepared to meet the needs of the elderly population. However, it should be highlighted that between the ICTs and the elderly people there is still a technological gap which is far from bringing these people closer in order to make them feel part of the society, unfortunately it can increase the feelings of exclusion and isolation among elderly people. Our seniors were born and lived their life in a completely different reality where the communication and relationships were not mediated by technologies. This digital gap suggests the need for creating tools which, since the beginning, take into consideration the characteristics and specific needs of the users they are addressed to. Otherwise this can lead to an increased digital gap and, in consequence, greater feelings of frustration, isolation and rejection.

¹⁴⁸ www.euronaviga.com

¹⁴⁹ www.aal-persona.org

¹⁵⁰ www.project-coliving.eu

¹⁵¹ www.gomylife-project.eu

¹⁵² www.host-aal.eu

The Butler system

Considering the advantages offered by the ICTs, the needs that an aged society has and the existing digital gap, our team has developed the Butler System, aimed at enhancing the connectivity and social network as well as the inclusion of seniors in the digital age.

The Butler system is a social and e-health technological platform based on the web technology and Virtual Reality (VR), addressed mainly to elders without experience in ICTs and including also tools to support formal and informal caregivers, families, etc. Its main objectives are the improvement of users' emotional state, the empowerment of the social support network through the use of new technologies, and the provision of activities that help to improve the emotional state and quality of life of the elderly population (Botella, Baños, Etchemendy, Castilla, García-Palacios, Alcañiz, 2011). The system was designed following both the Active Aging and Positive Psychology perspectives.

As regards the Active Aging approach, the World Health Organization defines it as *"the optimization process for health, participation and security in order to improve the quality of life as people age; that enables people to realize about their physical, social and mental health potential throughout their entire life cycle and to participate in the society according to their needs, desires and capacities, while protection, safety and proper care are provided to them"* (WHO, 2002: 12). In a general framework, the WHO (2002) identifies five essential guidelines to maximize active ageing:

1. Having a good health: prevention and promotion of health.
2. Having a good physical functioning: maintaining the physical activity.
3. Having a good mental functioning: maintaining the learning and mental capacity.
4. Being independent and self-sufficient: specific prevention of disability and dependency.
5. Social network and social participation: promoting and maintaining activity and social participation.

As regards the Positive Psychology approach, there is significant evidence about the role of positive emotions on health and wellbeing. The inclusion of positive emotions in the psychological treatments is taking more and more relevance and presence. The Butler system was thought out and developed from these frameworks.

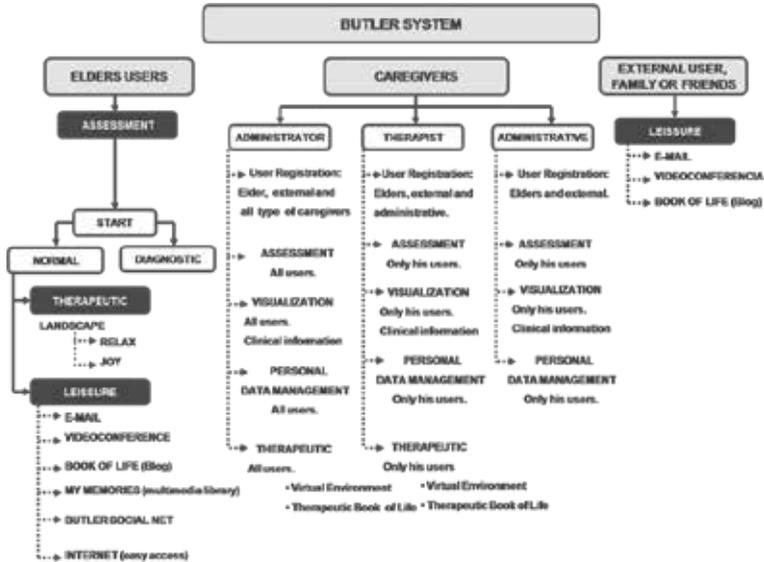
Next, a brief description of the system and the studies that have been conducted is offered. For the full description of the Butler System see Botella et al. (2011) and Baños, Etchemendy, Castilla, García-Palacios, Quero, Botella (2012).

Butler 1.0: description

The first version of Butler is addressed to three different users: the elderly, formal caregivers, and relatives and friends. Butler is structured into three

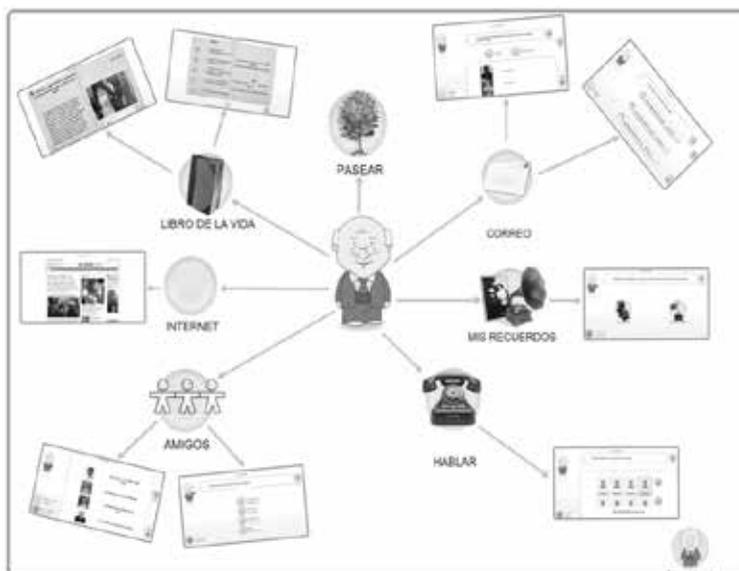
levels of action (assessment, intervention and leisure) and each user profile can access specific applications within each level of action (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: The Butler 1.0 System's Structure



- a) *Assessment level:* Each time that user enters the system, a diagnostic screening is made to monitor anxiety and depressive symptoms. Then, Butler analyzes this information and decides the most appropriate playful or therapeutic option for the user. If the user's mood is assessed as dysfunctional, Butler sends out an alarm to the caregiver. Additionally, the system prepares a summary of all the information gathered, which then is sent to the caregiver.
- b) *Intervention level:* It is composed of two applications. The purpose of the first one, "Virtual worlds", is to generate positive emotions; this tool includes two 3D virtual environments (VEs) (one for joy and one for relaxation) with several visual and auditory stimuli to produce changes in users' moods. The second one, "The Therapeutic Book of Life", enables clinicians to apply an intervention program of positive reminiscence to increase psychological wellbeing.
- c) *Leisure level:* This application was designed to increase social relationships, to share vital memories, and to entertain and promote the learning of new technologies. It is composed of the following elements: E-mails, Search Friends on the Butler net, My Memories, Book of Life (blog), and Easy Access to Internet (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Butler 1.0's Tools



The development of the version Butler 1.0 was monitored by an interdisciplinary team made up of psychologists, engineers and programmers. Furthermore, a usability expert was in charge of the adaptation of each proposed specification in order to fit it to the elderly population (design, navigation, etc.). During this process, the usability expert worked closely with the technical (engineers and programmers) team.

The first prototype of Butler was analyzed in a usability study, aimed to test the Butler's tools with real users (Castilla et al., 2013). The sample was composed of 10 participants within the age range from 60 to 72 and it was conducted in our usability laboratory. None of the participants had expertise in the use of a computer and they did not have a cell phone or other similar devices. The study was divided into four stages (iconography, navigation, help and evaluation through heuristics) and each recommendation obtained was performed in real time and implemented in the next stage. With the modifications implemented into Butler we obtained the first version of the system (Butler 1.0) and then, several studies were carried out to test its efficacy to increase psychological wellbeing in the users. Butler 1.0 was tested in different seniors' profiles, in different contexts and all studies produced positive results regarding its efficacy for increasing positive mood states and high degree of acceptance of elderly users.

The first one was a pilot study with 4 senior users recruited from Spanish Universities for old people within the age range from 67 to 74 (Botella et al., 2009). As this was the first test of Butler, and considering the necessary ethical cautions, we confirmed that the participants did not have psychological or cognitive problems or exhibit high scores in anxiety or depression. Regarding their experience with ICTs, two users did not have any experience with computers

and other two only used the computer to send e-mails. Each user used the Butler system for a range between four and ten sessions. Before and after each session, participants were asked about their mood, positive and negative emotions, satisfaction level and difficulty of use. Results showed that after using the system, the participants increased their mood, increased positive emotions and decreased their negative ones. In addition, they reported high levels of satisfaction and experienced low difficulty in using the system.

The next step was to test the system with more users (Etchemendy et al., 2011). This second study included 17 users within the age range from 58 to 79. They were recruited from two Spanish Universities for senior citizens and used the system during four sessions in our laboratory. None of them had psychological or cognitive problems or exhibited high scores in anxiety or depression. As for their levels of experience with ICTs, 8 participants had no experience with computers, mobile phones, etc.; 7 participants had minimal experience with technology, 1 participant had intermediate experience and 1 participant had experience using the Internet, sending e-mails, using mobile phones, etc. Results showed that after using the system and in all sessions, participants increased their positive emotions and decreased their negative ones, in addition, they obtained high levels of satisfaction, low levels of difficulty perception and they recommended Butler to other users.

The third study was aimed at analyzing specifically the Virtual Environments' efficacy to increase joy and relaxation in elderly users (Baños et al., 2012). The sample was composed of 18 participants over 55 years old who used the Virtual Environments on two occasions. The study was performed in our laboratory and the participants were recruited from two Spanish Universities for senior citizens. As regards the familiarity with technology, 7 participants had no experience with computers, 10 used computers for sending e-mails and 1 used them for drawing. The study showed that after using both Virtual Environments, participants reported higher scores in joy and relaxation and lower scores in sadness and anxiety. Furthermore, low levels of difficulty of use and high levels of satisfaction and sense of presence in the Virtual Environments were obtained.

A fourth study was performed in Zurich (Preschl et al., 2012). The tool named Therapeutic Book of Life was translated into German and tested through a controlled study with 36 elders aged 65 and over ($M=70.0$ $SD=4.4$) with depressive symptoms. The participants were recruited through advertisements in newspapers, supermarkets, libraries, etc. and it was conducted at the University of Zurich. Results showed significant changes from pre- to post-treatment and follow-up for depression symptoms, well-being, self-esteem, and reminiscence.

The last study so far was performed in a Nursery Home and in an Adult Day Care Centre with 14 participants within the age range from 64 to 92, who used the system during 10 sessions (Etchemendy, Castilla, Baños & Botella, 2013). Twelve participants did not have any experience with ICTs, one participant had basic experience and one participant had intermediate experience. None of them had functional, visual or auditory impairment and depression or anxiety clinic indexes that did not allow using Butler in an independent way. Results showed

a significant increase in positive emotions and mood and a significant decrease in negative mood. A high level of satisfaction was reported in all sessions.

As can be seen, Butler 1.0 was tested in different samples and contexts, and the results showed that all users could use the system, all reported high satisfaction and the use of Butler helped them to enhance their mood.

Although Butler 1.0 showed its efficacy to improve mood and wellbeing in elderly people, nevertheless, the system could not generate an e-social network that enhances the social relationship of seniors. The experience of use was satisfactory but we could not test the hypotheses about the potential of Butler to expand the social network and connectivity between users. During the studies the reduced number of users prevented to generate a large social network with a size able to generate the social synergy allowed by ICTs. The main obstacle was that Butler 1.0 was a closed access platform where the formal caregiver is always the administrator of the whole system. In Butler 1.0 both social and e-health functionalities are necessarily linked. This restriction was the main difficulty that led us to start thinking of a new version of Butler, giving rise to Butler 2.0

Butler 2.0: description

Butler 2.0 includes all resources and tools from the previous version, but it also contains new applications and some relevant changes.

As mentioned before, Butler 1.0 is a closed social network where the access, password, users, etc. were administered by caregivers and the psychological assessment on mood (anxiety and depression) was performed each day that the elderly person entered into Butler. This way of functioning made it very difficult to generate a social network. For this reason, in Butler 2.0 this structure has been modified and the system has been provided with a greater flexibility and the possibility of interconnection with others that implies a notable advance with respect to the anterior version.

Butler 2.0 also has three types of users (the elderly, formal caregiver and relatives/friends of an elderly person) and includes tools for each one of these profiles. The difference lies in the fact that two ways of functioning have been generated (leisure and professional) regardless of the administration and the availability of some applications, but they share the users flow (elderly) that both types of functioning are generating. Next, both types of functioning are described:

1. *Butler-Leisure*¹⁵³: it offers tools for the elderly and their relatives/friends and its purpose is to improve the social use of the platform. Butler-Leisure is a completely open access platform that can be used from any computer with Internet access and works as any e-social network currently available on the net (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) where each user obtains and administers his/her own account and enjoys the system. Butler-Leisure offers an e-mailbox, videoconference, a search of friends in the Butler

¹⁵³ www.mundomayordomo.com

- net, the Book of Life (blog) where the users can write pages, and the possibility of sharing it with friends from Butler net. It also provides access to a digital library with multimedia elements (photos, music, videos), and an easy access to the Internet with favorites links and access to the two VEs to generate positive emotions (joy and relaxation) (See Figure 3).
2. *Butler-Clinical*: this application works as Butler 1.0, keeping the link between the three user's profiles (elderly, formal caregiver and family or friends) and the caregiver as the main administrator of e-social and e-health tools. Each user profile has different tools available. As regards elderly users, the social tools are the same as in Butler-Leisure (e-mail mailbox, videoconference, search friends on the Butler net, Book of Life, two VEs to promote positive emotions, a digital library with multimedia elements and an easy access to the Internet). Regarding e-health tools, Butler-Clinical adds the Therapeutic Book of Life that allows applying a training program of specific positive events from the autobiographical memory, based on the Review of Life Therapy (Haight, Webster, 1995; Serrano, Latorre, Gatz, Montanes, 2004). For formal caregivers, the main goal of Butler-Clinical is to facilitate and optimize the professional work through daily mood assessment tools as well as a database with all users' daily emotional information. In addition, an alarm system is included to send a warning to the professional in charge when the user's score reaches a certain clinical level. The system also restricts the user's access to social or clinical tools when is therapeutically recommended. Lastly, for relatives and friends, this option allows the elderly people to share their book of life with them as well as contact with them using the e-mail and videoconference.

As it can be seen, Butler-Leisure works as an open access platform and Butler-Clinical works as a closed access platform. Nevertheless, the Butler net allows the search of new people to meet and connect with from both Butler Leisure and Butler Clinical.

Figure 3: Butler 2.0



Conclusion and future lines

As it can be observed, since the beginning until today the whole development and implementation of the Butler System was guided by rigorous and detailed work centered on the objectives that we intended to achieve. Firstly, a prototype was developed, which after a usability study emerged in the first version. This first version was tested with different users and contexts. The studies conducted showed, on the one hand, that the system was capable of helping its users to overcome the existing digital gap between the ICTs and senior citizens; on the other hand, its efficacy in the improvement of the mood state and psychological wellbeing was also tested. Furthermore, the experience of using the system produced high levels of satisfaction and acceptance on the part of the users (Baños et al., 2012; Botella et al., 2009; Castilla et al., 2013; Etchemendy et al., 2011; Etchemendy et al., 2013). However, these studies also showed the limitations of Butler 1.0 and guided the development of the next version of the system.

Our intention in developing Butler 2.0 is that the system can be used from anywhere worldwide and can turn into a social net for senior citizens including a large amount of users; a net where they can feel supported and understood, a net where they like to participate. ICTs are powerful tools for increasing socialization and connectivity among their users, however, if under any social Apps there is no significant group of users to utilize it, the existence of the application becomes pointless. The leap of Butler 1.0 forward to Butler 2.0 tries to overcome this obstacle. Butler needed availability and flexibility that the version 1.0 did

not have; having said that, it was necessary to achieve this objective without losing its social and e-health functionalities.

Furthermore, we want to highlight that Butler is not only a social platform addressed to elderly people, but also offers an e-monitoring and e-assistance structure to support health professionals who work with this population. Therefore, a key aspect we considered in designing Butler 2.0 was not to reduce the different levels of use but to adapt the system to different situations. It is evident that if Butler-Leisure brings together a large amount of users, the use that the professional can make of Butler-Clinical will be more powerful. Our steps, therefore, are centered on generating that positive synergy between both functionalities.

Currently Butler 2.0 (Leisure) has been translated into German, soon will be translated and implemented in Holland and its Spanish version is already available to be used from any computer with Internet access¹⁵⁴. At this moment, two studies are being carried out with the aim of testing its general psychological efficacy and usability and acceptability aspects on the part of their users, in real environments (nursing homes and seniors' centers) in different cities of Spain.

Finally, Butler 2.0 has won the first award given by *LLGA Cities Pilot the Future 2013*. It consists of an annual program that in the past editions got together 42 cities worldwide and 1519 providers, carrying out more than 30 pilot studies bringing together 285 million citizens worldwide. In LLGA 2013, 1117 technological solutions were presented which were evaluated by a jury made up of 248 persons. As a winner, the Butler System will be implemented in Mexico FD, a city with 8.85 million citizens out of which 11.6% are over 60 years old. As for the European level, the Butler system belongs to the European action *European Innovation Partnership-Active Healthy Ageing (EIP-AHA)*, an important initiative created by the European Union that bring together the best teams with specific and determining actions regarding senior citizens.

¹⁵⁴ www.mundomayordomo.com

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You Learn through Traveling, as You Travel through Learning. Modern Education of the Elderly Provided by Elderhostel

Introduction

The concept of lifelong learning is used to encourage the rejection of the formal framework of traditional education and to continue learning as well as gaining experience and developing skills throughout every stage of human life. This attempt is being made in the time of dynamic civilizational development as well as demographic and social changes, where on the one hand knowledge and skills are rapidly depreciated, but on the other hand there is an increase in life expectancy, which results in growing participation of the elderly, who utilize experience gained during youth in their personal and professional life, in the society. Experientialeducation and learning take into account the characteristics of mental functioning of adults in order to meet their educational needs. Outdoor education, carried out in line with these guidelines, also yields an additional health benefit, which is of key importance in the era of aging population. Today, lifelong learning is a necessity for success in one's general social and individual life. In the current demographic climate, lifelong experiential learning can be implemented in an attractive and effective way.

This article attempts to examine the practical implementation of the concept of lifelong experiential learning in the largest educational and travel organization for the elderly - Elderhostel. Their theoretical principles and practical operation have been assessed and then verified from the perspective of experiential and lifelong education as well as learning.

The progressing aging of the population requires shifting the focus to the needs of the group of oldest citizen, also with respect to education. Elderhostel is one of many organizations offering education and travel activities for the elderly, also providing intergenerational trips for grandparents and grandchildren, aimed at getting to know each other as well as developing and strengthening their relationships. Elderhostel, however, is the oldest and the most popular organization among educationally active seniors inspiring other initiatives in this field.

Origins and the mission

The core objective of Elderhostel's mission is to educate the elderly through their traveling. The motto of the organization, "The world is our classroom", shows the need for the elderly to undertake active learning through direct learning and experiential learning. Elderhostel implements the concept of lifelong learning based on the modern model of active experiential learning, emphasizing outdoor education with an element of self-discovery and adventure. Trips are used as an opportunity for intellectual stimulation, meeting educational needs and sharing education experiences with like-minded people. The form of education offered is consistent with the currently promoted model of healthy and successful old age, stressing its positive aspects (Mills, 1993).

Elderhostel was founded as an initiative of two friends: Martin Knowlton – a traveler, social activist and former teacher, and David Bianco – a university administrative worker. The concept of combining learning and travel was developed during M. Knowlton's four-year stay in Europe. Equipped with just a backpack, Knowlton was visiting one country after another, staying in youth hostels, where the atmosphere, especially in the French, German and Scandinavian ones, made a long-lasting impression on him. The operation of Elderhostel was not only inspired by tourism and its educational benefits as such, but also the possibility of meeting travelers from all over the world in simple and economical accommodation. The beginning of the concept of educational activation of the oldest generation of Americans was inspired by Scandinavian folk schools, where the elderly played an active and positive role in promoting folk culture in the areas of art, music and dance among younger generations. Having come back to the States, M. Knowlton discussed the operating principles of the organization with D. Bianco. The discussion resulted in an outline of an organization, which would offer an informal educational program, carried out during thematically varied trips, including logistics ensuring comfortable and affordable accommodation (Culbertson, 1997).

In the summer of 1975, in New Hampshire, five colleges and universities joined to implement Elderhostel programs. Five years later, the pioneering group of 220 participants grew to as many as 20 000 (Mills, 1993). The first international program aimed at promoting experiential learning was implemented in 1981 in Mexico, the United Kingdom and Scandinavia. International programs are characterized by a strong cultural element, and often relate to local history, tradition, art, literature, cuisine and language. They make up 1/5 of all Elderhostel's programs and are carried out on all seven continents. (Hardwick, 2003) In 1985, intergenerational programs which integrated the elderly with their grandchildren or other younger family members through the experience of collaborative learning were initiated. In 1999, the intergenerational programs became international (Ireland, Norway and Greece). Being very popular, they enjoy favorable reputation of their participants, who appreciate the opportunity to strengthen family relationships, which often leads to starting a new way of life. In 1988, mobile programs were introduced, carried out on ships and ferries or even trains, which moved from one place to another to match an undertaken subject.

At present, Elderhostel's offer includes over 8 000 programs in all of the US and Canadian states, as well as 2 000 in over 100 countries all over the world, with their popularity being constantly on the rise. So far, the educational trips attracted over 5 million seniors. The participants willing to reserve a spot at the most popular courses need to be prepared to wait in long queues. Today, Elderhostel provides services to over 250 000 participants, which makes it the largest educational tourist organization in the world.

Activity

Elderhostel's headquarters, located in Boston (Massachusetts), are responsible for the program coordination, issuing catalogues, participant registration and providing information on the education offered. Very little effort is made with regard to advertising, which is limited to issuing an annual free catalogue, ordered by half a million people, sent to public libraries and available online. It consists of the program description, including activities, location characteristics, accommodation type, e.g. length of planned route, altitude (mountain trips), numbers of steps in hostels and route configuration. If participants are have doubts about their physical abilities, medical consultations are recommended. As far as advertising is concerned, the word of mouth is a sufficient form of promotion. (Tulle, 2004)

Being a non-profit organization, Elderhostel offers a variety of non-profit programs at low prices, which are not aimed at financial success, but an educational one, verified by participants' satisfaction. Not working under the financial pressure, the organization is focused solely on its educational mission, and avoids mass entertainment and specific skills training. (Tulle, 2004) Elderhostel is not a membership organization, which is why their participants incur only the cost of actual travel without additional membership fees. The cost starts from \$50 upwards, \$115 per day on average in the USA and Canada. A typical five night trip costs \$286 in the USA and \$320 in Canada. The payment is all-inclusive, covering the registration cost, accommodation, board, lectures, excursions, cultural trips, insurance, taxes and fees, often also various extracurricular activities. The only cost to the participant is the cost of travel to the course site. There are no hidden fees and the price is much lower than price offered by commercial operators. The costs are reduced to a minimum, e.g. thanks to the accommodation on student campuses that are free during the holiday season or involving participants in cooperative meal preparation or sponsorship. The organization offers scholarships to people who are unable to participate for financial reasons, costing roughly \$300 000 a year¹⁵⁵. The scholarships are granted only in the US in the participant's area of residence. Age is the only formal requirement for participation.

Originally, Elderhostel was meant to be used by people of 60 and above, at the moment participants have to be at least 55. Many programs accept spouses

¹⁵⁵ GuideStar, *Exchange Reports for Elderhostel*, <http://www2.guidestar.org/organizations/04-2632526/elderhostel.aspx>, retrieved 10.04.2013

of any age, as long as they accompany a person of at least 55. Initially, the accommodation offered consisted of colleges and universities. As the organization continued to grow, the network of host institutions expanded to include cultural and conference centers, state and national parks, museums, theatres etc., the number of which has grown to approx. 2 000. (Hardwick, 2003) The accommodation standards have improved - originally the participant had to sleep in dorms and were fed at canteens, today most of them sleep at hotels and conference centers with many asking for an en-suite bathroom. These days, nearly half of the programs offered take place outside the university campus. On the other hand, due to the improving health of subsequent senior generations, there are more and more programs designed for physical activation, which involves accommodation at camping sites and in tents. (Culbertson, 1997) The organization is open to people with disabilities, warning them however that they cannot be guaranteed an environment adapted to their needs outside America. Some programs take into account participants' special dietary requirements.

In recent years, Elderhostel has expanded its activity to encompass scientific research in the area of aging and lifelong learning especially from the perspective of motivating with educational travel ("*What Will Baby Boomers Want from Educational Travel*") and their mental stimulation ("*Mental Stimulation and Lifelong Learning Activities in the 55+ Population*"). In 2006, grants of \$5 000 each for doctoral research of the issue of aging and lifelong learning were funded (Mills, 1993).

Elderhostel is actively involved in opening lifelong learning institutes in the US. First *Institute for Learning in Retirement* (ILR), called *Institute for Retired Professionals*, was founded in New York in 1962, i.e. before Elderhostel was founded. Over the years their popularity grew mostly thanks to word of mouth and media attention. Some of IRLs undertook cooperation with Elderhostel. A voluntary association, Elderhostel Institute Network (EIN), which so far has helped to found over 200 *Life-Learning Institutes* (LLIs), was established. EIN does not control programs and fees; it is LLIs that have local powers in this regard (Juell, 2006).

Participant profile

It is mature and often experienced travelers who participate in educational and travelling programs; however, there are no specific requirements in terms of education and experience. The only requirement for participation is willingness to learn. Participants of Elderhostel programs include people of various ages, different professions, often exploring areas far from their professional interests and experience, e.g. a surgeon who learns how to play the piano, secretary taking part in dance classes and an engineer constructing musical instruments (Charboneau, 1993). There are six types of participants of programs organized by Elderhostel, interested in: activity, geographical issues, experimenting, adventure, faithfully adhering to the program and opportunists (Arsentault et al., 1998). An average participant is 71 years old, while the most popular age group

is 65-69. Women make up the majority - 64%, 67% participants are married, every fifth person is widowed (for many of them this is the first solitary trip), and 64% participants are college graduates (Culbertson, 1997). The majority of participants are of good health (Abraham, 1998), characterized by a high level of activity, formal educational qualifications, a high level of optimism and life satisfaction. (Elderhostel, 2007).

Senior participants of Elderhostel programs are viewed as an interesting research group and are often invited to participate in research projects. Their motivation and satisfaction from programs offered is what attracts researchers' particular attention. According to results obtained, the desire to acquire new knowledge, exploring new places and searching for new experiences are the most common motives behind taking part in educational and travel programs (Romaniuk, Romaniuk, 1992). According to a study carried out by M.D. Knowlton (1977), the pioneering group of participants were mostly motivated by the following factors: desire to try something new, short timeframe of courses, low cost, type of courses offered, mark-free system, and an opportunity to acquire knowledge. More recent studies (Arsenault et al. 1998), carried out on a sample group of 154 Elderhostel's participants, aged 42-85, focused on the evaluation of methods for making choices on informal learning experiences. The group was asked about the reasons behind choosing Elderhostel's offer. The answers allowed 14 factors affecting this decision to be determined:

- location (e.g. courses chosen due to the associated memories),
- travel (distance, time and means of transport),
- program (e.g. balance between time spent in the classroom and free time or practicing the subject of the course),
- course content (e.g. building up existing knowledge),
- accommodation (e.g. en-suite bathroom, food quality),
- cost (e.g. off-season courses),
- dates (not conflicting with existing plans, avoiding tourist seasons, personal preference with regard to the climate, time of the year etc.),
- negotiating strategies with the co-traveler in order to agree on the destination (e.g. joint decision, compromise),
- social factors (meeting spiritually like-minded people, making new friends, social integration),
- location (hotel location, opinions about the location, instructors, extra-curricular activities),
- organizational issues (program requirements, e.g. age, need to complete previous programs on level 1, 2 or 3, training quality, necessity to attend classes),
- personal requirements (needs, interests, unfulfilled dreams),
- escape (need to withdraw, need for a change, e.g. after experiencing a family tragedy),
- Information (content, quality and scope of information materials, e.g. a directory, the verbal recommendations of Elderhostel, articles on Elderhostel).

In 2001, similarities and differences between participants of Elderhostel's domestic programs and international programs were examined. It was revealed that the strongest motivational factors behind taking part in domestic programs included: escape from personal problems, program timing, friends' influence and accommodation. As far as international programs were concerned, the most popular factors were: interest in the history and culture of the location, possibility to socialize with the locals and an opportunity to discover one's family history. (Szucs, Daniels, McGuire, 2001).

In 2007, Elderhostel conducted its own research to learn how their participants differ from other seniors not taking part in the organization's programs. The American population of 55+ were divided into four groups: Focused Mental Achievers (13% of the population), Contented Recreational Learners (34%), Anxious Searchers (23%), Isolated Homebodies (18%) and Pessimists (11%) characterized by poor health and highly limited resources. Focused Mental Achievers and Contented Recreational Learners are characterized by an extremely high level of activity, high levels of formal education and a high level of optimism and life satisfaction. The majority of participants of Elderhostel programs belonged to the Focused Mental Achiever (49%) and Contented Recreational Learner (35%) groups (Elderhostel, 2007).

The research indicates high satisfaction from the participation in Elderhostel programs - 75% of participants decide to travel again (Culbertson, 1997). Other research carried out with Elderhostel participants shows that the satisfaction with courses is linked to mental and social motivation, which underlines the importance of the subject being close to learners' intellectual interests and class structure allowing social interactions to be developed. No relationship between satisfaction, age and sex was found. (Abraham, 1998) Also professionals and teachers participating in the programs reported high satisfaction related to conducting courses and were happy to commit (e.g. McCullough-Brabson, 1995).

Characteristics of programs offered

Elderhostel programs are designed to meet natural human needs, which are also present in middle-age and older people, to help with acquiring new information, developing their skills and broadening knowledge, especially in line with their interests and experience gained. The organization offers an opportunity to discover new experiences, locations and to meet new people. It attracts senior citizens thanks to the broad educational offer, carried out in various locations, in the company of educationally active peers and specialists teaching in line with informal education system in the atmosphere of discovery and adventure.

Domestic programs usually take one week (from Sunday afternoon to Friday afternoon), international ones - 2-3 weeks or even as long as 6 weeks. Significant minority last one or two weekends and more weeks. Programs are inspired and created locally. International courses offer an opportunity to explore culture, environment and history of countries visited. During every 3 weeks' stay abroad,

the second week is spent with a local family, which creates a perfect opportunity to establish a direct, interpersonal, warm relationship and learn about the local tradition and culture, especially when staying in exotic countries. The last week is devoted to a discussion on the subject of the trip, knowledge and experience gained (Culbertson, 1997).

In general, the programs are practical and activating. In addition to standard sightseeing, participants have an opportunity to take part in a wide range of activities. Many of them combine the element of mental stimulation, social engagement, physical activity and creative expression. (Elderhostel, 2007) Offers: lectures, classes, discussion, outdoor classes and extracurricular activities. There are 3 classes a day (30 - 90 minutes), one of which is compulsory. In practice, most seniors participate in all three of them. The courses are carried out in groups of 35-40 people (Goggin, 1999). Some lecturers recommend a reading list before the classes. Most participants take this recommendation seriously (McCullough-Brabson, 1995).

Elderhostel's courses are characterized by the lack of academic requirements. No specific preparation in a given area is required from participants. (Charbonneau, 1993) Classes have been designed to be stimulating, inspiring, interesting, but not requiring prior formal education and knowledge on a given subject. Grading system, exams, homework were discarded. Lectures are conducted by experts and trips are organized in order to provide an opportunity to gain direct experience. Trips are usually organized in a way to promote the spirit of adventure. Experts are responsible for providing stimulating information during in-depth lectures and topical excursions. Participants are encouraged to ask questions. Direct contact and lively discussions in a group of participants and tutors are used to pass and to consolidate newly acquired knowledge. (Culbertson, 1997) Basic methodical recommendations for tutors indicate the need for: good knowledge of the subject, being prepared and organized, implementing various presentation methods, encouraging to comment and ask questions, putting forward questions to activate participants, being lively and enthusiastic, sense of humor, friendly attitude, establishing personal and friendly relationships with participants, being sensitive to their needs and interests. (McCullough-Brabson, 1995)

Friendly community atmosphere encourages learning. Apart from lectures and excursions as well as extracurricular activities, programs offer free time for broadening one's interests or relaxing. The particular focus is directed towards the creation of informal and friendly conditions, which makes sharing experience with likely-minded people and gaining new friends possible. (Culbertson, 1997) Company of others, also during meals and evening entertainment, is a very attractive factor for widowed people and people traveling alone. (McCullough-Brabson, 1995)

The subject scope of Elderhostel's programs is very broad and is focused around the following modules:

- Outdoor Adventures - exercise for body and mind, e.g. mountain climbing, cycling around a given country.

- Discover - exploring the landscape and culture of the USA and Canada, visiting national parks and cities, visiting places and people, discussing events that influenced the formation of the coexisting nations.
- Individual Skills - acquiring new skills or developing interests, e.g. cooking, practicing yoga, pottery classes. Access to expert advice on the subject of interest.
- Intergenerational - offering experience connecting generations. Designed for grandparents and their grandchildren at the age of at least 4 (one participant plus one grandchild). They are aimed at sharing experience in shared areas of interest. The subject and schedule are designed to match the age of participants, focused on adventure and learning together. Examples of subjects: archaeology, geology, space, children literature. Most participants make souvenirs that their grandchildren can take home.
- Liberal Arts - literature, opera, singing, painting, historical figures, philosophy.
- Service Learning – programs aimed at providing voluntary service in cooperation with various organizations, e.g. learning support for school-children, helping to rebuild forest environment, archaeological support or working as museum curators, participation in scientific research, teaching English as a foreign language, building low-budget houses. Voluntary work often requires traveling to poor regions.
- Adventures Afloat Programs – classes are conducted during water trips.
- Women-only program - with an emphasis on a woman's point of view with regard to various topics - from art to medicine.
- Independent Explorations – an opportunity to take part in joint lectures with independent outdoor expeditions.
- Music programs - during this program, participants watch films, listen to guest performers and play instruments. Classes start with joint singing, a short lecture, guest performance, playing instruments and dancing.

Subjects offered as part of the above modules are very diverse and attractive. For instance travelling programs offer: skiing, sailing, hiking in Swiss mountains, trekking in Nepal, diving and Galapagos Islands excursions. Examples of music courses: Chopin - Music and the Man behind It, Discovering Opera, Exotic Music and Culture, Film Music, Goethe and Music, Famous Conductors, Beatles Music Guide, Humor in Music, Indian Music Composers, George Gershwin's Music and Live, Musical Landscapes, Music in Nature: Nature in Music, Polish Language and Music, Songs of our Fathers, What Makes a Singer a Diva?, The World of Folk Music. (McCullough-Brabson 1995) Each program includes an element of learning, no matter whether it is digging for dinosaur bones or Thai cooking, taking part in car racing, exploring places associated with life and work of Monet, visiting India, hot air ballooning with grandchildren, basket weaving, studying literature in London or participating in scientific research for the protection of endangered species. Only one subject is strongly prohibited - gerontology, since the aim of the organization is to infuse the elderly with new strengths rather than focus on damage caused by aging.

Modern dimension of life-long learning as the model implemented by elderhostel

The concept of lifelong learning goes beyond the traditional understanding of learning. It assumes that learning does not end with the completion of formal education in young age, but it prepares people for relearning, which is crucial for efficient functioning in the modern, rapidly changing world, where knowledge and skills gained are quickly depreciated (Ya-Hui Su, 2007). The concept of lifelong learning undermines the traditional model where students undergo a one-off education course to prepare them for professional work, which is then carried out until they reach their retirement age. The term lifelong learning usually refers to professional education undertaken during adulthood and old age. It is supplemented by lifewide learning, a less popular concept, which takes into account a wide range of multidimensional human educational needs. Professional sphere is one of many dimensions of human life that requires skill and knowledge development (Baird 1999, Bennetts, 2001). Both concepts of life-long-lifewide learning explain the need for continuing education in adulthood (Schneider, 2003).

Elderhostel's educational activity is carried out in line with the practical concept of lifelong and lifewide learning. Discarding seniors' needs in terms of professional development, it focuses on an offer promoting pure pleasure of entirely voluntary learning effort aimed at developing one's interests, passions and well as mental, emotional and social needs. In a diverse and interesting way, it is an answer to specific educational needs of the elderly, who prefer to learn through traveling and reading, as scientific studies reveal. (Boulton-Lewis, 2006) Elderhostel is an educational alternative for those seniors who are dissatisfied with traditional courses for the elderly. (Versen, 1986)

The European Commission (2001) divides learning into following groups: *formal, non-formal and informal*. Elderhostel has dismissed the concept of formal learning for the sake of promoting the informal one, which is free of institutionalization features. While being characterized by structure in regard to learning goals, time and support, it does not implement a grading system or diplomas. Elderhostel's programs also do not lack informal learning features, as sometimes they offer unstructured and uncertified form of spending pastime.

According to the concept of active learning, it is the student himself who is responsible for gaining skills and knowledge, which is consistent with Elderhostel's educational model. This model offers active learning through experiential education, carried out in an informal learning system. It is focused on a bidirectional process that occurs between a teacher and a student, who are involved in a direct experience (Itin 1999) in the conditions of unrestrained learning. The teacher provides the student with an opportunity to gain experience, personally being a part of the process of active learning, co-experiencing it with students and responding to their reactions, thereby providing learning by doing. In accordance with the classical model of D.A. Kolb (Kolb 1984), following the experience stage, where students play an active role, there is a reflection stage, which is aimed at processing, generalizing, comprehension and drawing conclusions as well as applying the newly gained knowledge in subsequent experiments.

Elderhostel's experiential education is a basic form of implementation of the life-wide learning.

The programs offered by Elderhostel are based on learning through understanding the meaning of actions from experiential learning. While experiential learning stresses the mutuality of the process between the teacher and a student, experiential education is focused on the learning process from the perspective of the learner. It is learning through reflection over one's direct experience (Itin, 1999). In this type of learning, the knowledge is built through the transformation of an experience (Kolb, 1984). The elderly and older people have a vast repository of life experience, which is often referred to in the process of learning new skills and information. Experiential learning is the fundamental concept of adult and older age education.

Experiential education, stemming from educational progressivism, has become a source of inspiration for experiential education concepts, underlining one of their aspects, e.g. physical or vocational education. Learning and experiential education proposed by Elderhostel are carried out in the form of outdoor education and adventure driven education. Educational excursions as well as sports classes are used as a point of reference for lectures offered. Outdoor education involves various forms of activities carried out in the fresh air (Sheard, Golby, 2006), which utilize experiencing the environment, e.g. sailing, hiking, camping, group games, swimming, cycling, winter sports or elements of survival. The main goal of adventure education is to make the learners face situations involving adventure and challenge (Ford, Blanchard, 1993), which activate the process of learning, growth and the awareness of one's potential (Miles, Priest, 1990). Outdoor adventure education provides a direct and deliberate exposure to an activity including an element of adventure and challenge, in order to provide intra- and interpersonal growth (Meyer, Wenger, 1998). The research carried out confirms the positive influence of this type of education on personal development of participants (Watts et al. 1992, Miles, Priest 1990, Luckner, Nandler, 1997).

According to recent studies, courses offered by Elderhostel allow basic human needs such as competitiveness, autonomy and relationship needs to be met. Excursions, which involve mental and physical effort, create an opportunity to perform certain tasks and achieve goals, which reinforces a sense of competition. Excursions and classes are not obligatory, despite group work the participants are allowed to choose their individual needs and educational goals, which in return enables them to build a sense of autonomy and independence in life. Furthermore, programs encourage socialization among participants and among the locals (Young-Joo, Janke, 2011).

Undertaking activities involving physical activity, mental stimulation and social relations is related to better health in the elderly. The three components of successful aging are offered in the lifelong learning programs, offered by Elderhostel, promoting a high level of physical, mental and social functioning and life commitment. Educational travel offered can be used as a measure to promote health and wellbeing among the elderly. (Young-Joo, Janke, 2011) This opinion is shared by the participants themselves, underlining their importance for mental

stimulation, encouraging creative thinking, physical activity and social engagement for successful aging. (Elderhostel, 2007)

Summary and Conclusions

In the era of aging societies, the concept of experiential lifelong learning becomes more and more popular and is increasingly often implemented in practice. At the same time, the elderly are increasingly interested in travelling and self-development (Ritchie 2003), which accounts for the growing popularity of educational travelling in this group. In this article, the validity of theoretical assumptions and practical operation of organizations dedicated to education of the elderly have been verified from the perspective of lifelong learning and experiential education. Elderhostel, the largest education and travel organization for the elderly, which provides unique combination of learning, travel and experiencing social relations, has been chosen as an example. It has been shown that the concept of experiential learning offered by Elderhostel through travelling is integrated with learning - learning becomes a travel and the world becomes a classroom. Elderhostel blazes a trail in experiential learning among the older population, creating their own model of educational tourism and work methodology. Pioneering in this field, it quickly grew into a major project, still developing and introducing innovations to meet participants' expectations.

The success of its activity, observed through its growing popularity, despite a lack of marketing and commercial operation proves the existence of educational needs in the elderly and adults, which can be effectively met through active learning and direct experiential education. Their motto, implemented in practice, underlining the need for the elderly to undertake active experiential education with an element of self-discovery and adventure, which takes place outside the walls of educational institutions, is carried out in line with the objectives of lifelong experiential learning. Elderhostel's adopted principle of operation ensures a great popularity of programs offered, which verifies its social demand. It can be assumed that Elderhostel's popularity will continue to grow with baby boomer population and next generations, which are better educated and showing more involvement with voluntary continuation of education in the area of their own, often not work-related interests, having entered the retirement age.

3

SENIOR ACTIVATION AND LIFE ANIMATION

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Directions and Aims of the (pro)Seniors Policy: Development – Integration – Activation

Introduction

As a result of the progress of civilization and the effects of the second demographic transition the generational layout of societies changes. Old age, venerable old age, become accessible to most people in highly developed countries. Social and economic “boundaries” of old age change too, moving late adulthood further into human life. This forces in a way the formulation of new vectors of social policy as tools to prevent potential social exclusion of older people. Today’s retirees can and should take up qualitatively new social roles: this of an economically independent consumer of goods, a sybarite realizing sophisticated patterns of life, a cognitively engaged observer, a participant of the civil forum, a member of an association, a commentator of events, a learner, a volunteer, a mentor, etc.

Today, we face a growing number of people in old and advanced age, as well as a delay in the aging process, especially in the social dimension. Today’s 60 - and even 70-year-olds can not in any way be regarded as old persons. This brings about certain consequences. The aim of this paper is to present main directions of the world, European and national / regional social policy in its optimizing mainstream (Błędowski, 2002:200), because positive experience of aging of individuals is reinforced by their activity in the fields designated by an area of qualitatively new social needs.

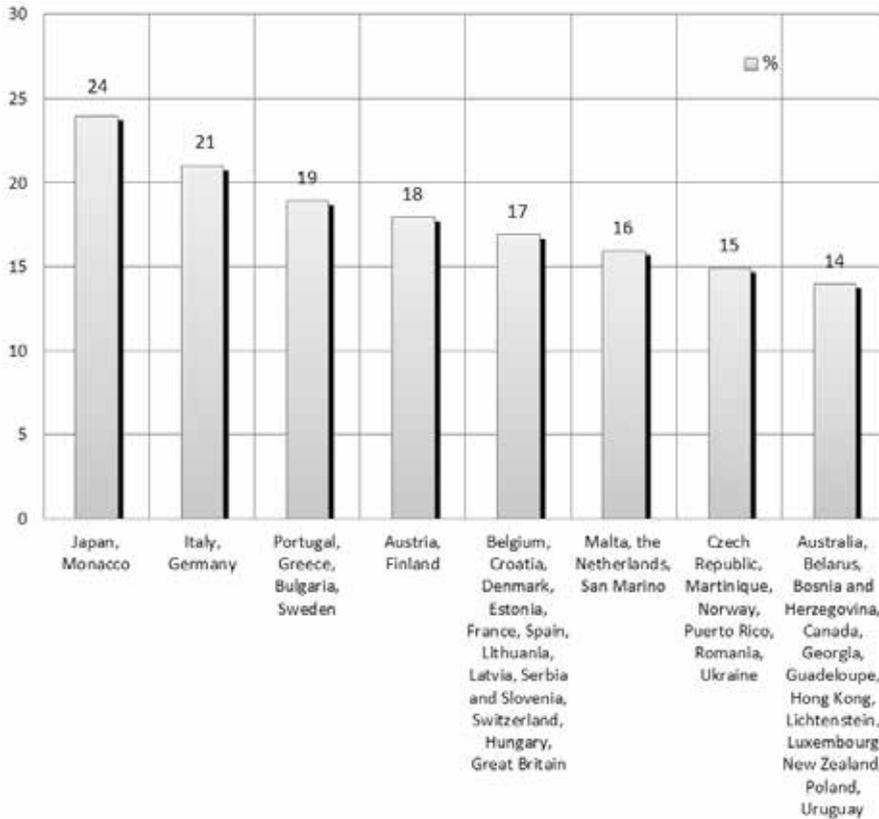
Theoretical frames of the problem

The paradigm of modern gerontology is the activity theory (Cavan, Burgess, Goldhamer, Havighurst - 1949). Its premises are that to maintain a positive self-image an aging person should take on new types of activity while replacing the social roles that have been lost with the new ones. Well-being of individuals is in fact the result of their involvement in the newly adopted roles, and social, physical, and intellectual activity, as a socially appreciated value leads

to higher levels of life satisfaction (Halicki, 2010:14; Szarota, 2010:34-38; Zych, 2010:180-183).

A demographic analysis indicates progressive aging of the world population, advanced demographic senility of the Old Continent, including Poland.

Figure 1. Groups of the demographically oldest countries of the world in % [2012]



Source: self study based on Population Ages 65, *Population Reference Bureau 2012*, <http://www.prb.org/DataFinger/Topic/Rankings.aspx?ind=11>

The progress of the aging is illustrated by demographic data: as of January 1, 1985, in the EU countries 12.8% of all citizens were 65 years and older (59.3 million) and on January 1, 2010, this value reached the level of 17.4% (87 million people) (*Active...*,2011:7).

In Europe, the number of people in the pre-productive age diminishes, while it increases in the next two cohorts. The average length of life increases. A prospect of simultaneous, yet separate existence of four generations: grandchildren, parents, grandparents and great-grandparents becomes visible. The number of

descendants (grandparents) will exceed the number of ascending generations (grandchildren). Humanity has not yet dealt with such a phenomenon.

The problem of demographic senility concerns Poland in a particular way. Calculations of the Central Statistical Office show that in 1950 Poles aged 65 years and over constituted just over 5% of the general population, 50 years later - 12.4%, in 2010 - 13.6%, and in 2012 - 14 %. Extremely alarming are forecasts concerning the data in the near quarter century future: in 2035 according to estimates by demographers, this percentage will reach 23.5%, or 8,358,000 people (*Rocznik demograficzny*, 2011:52). This issue is illustrated by the data in table 1.

Table 1: Diagnosis – demographic prediction in Poland: gender, the so called double aging

| Age/gender | 2010 | 2035 |
|------------|-------|-------|
| Total 65+ | 14,0% | 23,2% |
| Total 80+ | 3,5% | 7,2% |
| Women 65+ | 16,3% | 26,5% |
| Women 80+ | 4,7% | 9,2% |
| Men 65+ | 10,6% | 19,7% |
| Men 80+ | 2,2% | 5,0% |

Source:Basedon CSO data; see Błędowski, 2012, p. 12-15

The percentage of people in post-productive age (60 years or more for women and 65 or more years for men) will increase. In 2035, this group will constitute 26.7% of the total Polish population, an increase of 11 percentage points compared to 2007¹⁵⁶.

The median age of the Poles in 2035 will probably be 47.9 years (including 49.7 years for women and 46 years for men, 48.6 years for the urban population, and a median of 46.9 years for residents of rural areas.) Forecasts indicate that about 2060 - apart from Slovakia - Poles will become demographically the oldest nation in Europe, with a median age exceeding 54 years.

The perspective of the beginning of senility changes. The period of late adulthood extends, while euphemisms such as “young old”, “third”, “fourth age” are being introduced. The beginning of actual senility will be moved further within human life, to the 70th or 75th year of life (Jankowski, 2006:60).

The result of the demographic change of the process called double aging, feminization of senility and seniors’ single life¹⁵⁷ can be phenomena not only constituting a burden to the national economy but also causing serious socio-cultural transformations. Generations reaching old age represent an increasingly higher level of education, which can and should be the reason for

¹⁵⁶ *Prognoza ludności Polski na lata 2008-2035* (Polish population forecasts for the period 2008-2035) [http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL_L_prognoza_ludnosci_Pl_2008-2035.pdf]

¹⁵⁷ In the multi-family, multigenerational households in 2007 there were 11% of those over 60 years (*Obraz typowego Polaka w starszym wieku* (*The typical image of a Pole in their old age*), CBOS, BS/2/2010, Warsaw, January 2010, p. 2. In 2030, there will be 53.3% households of single persons aged 65 +, including 17.3% of people aged 80 +. See.: P. Błędowski, *Starzenie się jako problem społeczny ...* (Aging as a Social Problem...), op. cit., p. 18.

changing the stereotype of old age. Seniors have the opportunity of longevity burdened less by polyopathy, with preserved agility and functional independence, which in turn may contribute to their increased activity and bring more sophisticated consumption patterns and lifestyles. However, without taking the required reforms in social policy, especially the optimization trend, the contrary, adverse phenomena can occur, such as scarcity, poverty, which is the result of low pensions, painful sense of isolation, ill health, social exclusion of large numbers of people.

The Concept of Active Aging – Vital Aging

The turn of the century brought about the interest in and even formulated the imperative of active aging. The documents of the United Nations and the European Union include the WHO definition that “Active aging is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. Successful aging is recognized by Barbara Gryglewska as “reaching old age with a low risk of disease and infirmity, with high mental and physical efficiency and well-maintained life activity” (Kaczmarczyk, Trafiałek, 2007:116-117; Baltes, Smith, 2003:123-135)

The result of the Second United Nations World Assembly on Aging of Societies (Madrid 2002) were three courses of action aimed at the demands of successful aging. Initiatives which aimed at good health took into account the prevention and reduction of chronic diseases, measures to reduce risk factors and supporting positive health factors, the development of friendly and accessible health care system for the elderly while taking into account the specific and different needs of men and women, providing support and education for (informal and contract) carers of the elderly and old. In terms of social participation the following priorities were recognized: providing learning opportunities throughout whole life, recognition and support for the participation of older people in the development of the economy, jobs and volunteering, depending on individual needs, preferences and capabilities, creating conditions and supporting full participation in family and social life (including convenient public transportation, political representation, creating a positive image of aging, supporting participation of women, support pro-seniors organizations.) When it comes to a sense of security, the issue to ensure protection and respect for the dignity of older people was recognized as the most important (including security and social justice, consumer protection, the fight against HIV - to minimize the extent and impact of AIDS, safe shelter, violence against older people) and reduce inequalities in the right to protect and fulfill the needs of older women¹⁵⁸.

The main directions of the current UN policy on the problems of aging of the world population are the issues related to the adoption of the problems of aging as a global priority, the need to ensure safe income for seniors, universal access to good quality pension schemes, the multiplication of the significance and

¹⁵⁸ *Active Aging: A Policy Framework*, WHO, Madrid 2002, pp. 45-53 [http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2002/WHO_NMH_NPH_02.8.pdf]

scope of permanent education leading to building a well-educated population of seniors, promotion of a healthy lifestyle, the pursuit of flexible labor market policies aimed at preventing discrimination based on age and gender in the workplace, taking inter-generational initiatives, building a social environment free of barriers, preparation of legal solutions conducive to better integration of women in labor resources and ensuring the provision of universal health care and social welfare on the basis of a stable system of social security, mobilization of the media, the private sector, NGOs, and the younger generations to efforts to rebuild public awareness, neutralize negative stereotypes of old age and unfavorable social behavior towards seniors. An issue of the enrichment of research resources in the field of gerontology has also been raised¹⁵⁹.

Social policy of european union towards the aging of societies

The countries of the European Union outlined vectors of joint actions aimed at preventing social exclusion of the most vulnerable citizens. This group in many countries includes also, because of the economic and poor health reasons, the oldest inhabitants. Measures taken by Member States are to contribute to the optimization of employment and work protection, they are to form the desired patterns of leisure and recreation, fight poverty, income disparities, and be focused on education and upgrading of skills, which is treated as an antidote to social problems: the opportunity to learn all life is an essential component of the European social model.

EU social policy takes into account the demands to provide assistance to economically most vulnerable and disabled people, integration efforts aimed at the entire population of the elderly, institutionalization at the local level of representations of older people, the establishment of systems monitoring the level of fulfilling the needs of older people, the organization of the training of staff working in the field of politics towards old people¹⁶⁰. The objectives of this policy are geared towards securing livelihood and efficient social security system for pensioners, the proper organization of health care, ensuring independence of older people, the creation of conditions for the integration of the older generation with other members of society (local community), and creating conditions for the intergenerational integration.

On the occasion of the European Year for Active Aging and Solidarity between Generations (2012) The European Union has set three main lines of action:

- Employment: with increasing life expectancy in Europe retirement age should also be raised. More opportunities for older people should be provided in the labor market, taking into account more flexible forms of employment.

¹⁵⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁶⁰ <http://europa.eu>

- Participation in social life: the contribution of older people to society should be more appreciated. Efforts should be made to create favorable conditions for seniors to maintain a higher and longer working activity.
- Independent living: improving the functioning of older people so that they could remain independent as long as possible¹⁶¹.

National social policy for the elderly and to old age - incorporating factors

According to the findings of gerontology the factors of optimizing physiological aging are genetics, good health, good physical and psychological condition, preserved functional independence, good living conditions (material), favorable environmental factors, good family relationships, strong social support network, good education, good habits, retained living and social activity, a sense of happiness, life satisfaction, a positive balance of life (Błędowski, 2002:11-23).

What is needed in order to determine priorities of local social policy, in addition to social and demographic findings, is a diagnosis of the needs of older people and, appropriate to those needs, available infrastructure and high quality of services (mainly social and health-related), proper arrangement of public space, a complete offer associated with satisfying their educational, cultural and recreational interests.

Among the identified risk factors generating social exclusion there should be distinguished: social isolation, inactivity, disability (especially of the oldest seniors), feeling of loneliness, dissatisfaction with the quality of life, poor health care (Kurowska, 2009:488) and low (though steadily growing) level of education, low digital and technological literacy and poor adaptability, impaired functional autonomy, lack of information and counseling.

Standardization activities should be aimed appropriately at social inclusion, mobilization, participation, better access to physiotherapy, convenient and barrier-free infrastructure, building local coalitions and networks of support, efforts to improve the standard of living, health care reform, geriatric care, including nursing, further strengthening the movement of Universities of the Third Age, and other forms of learning, e-inclusion, familiarizing with ICT, strengthening in social programs the preventive and adaptive function, the strengthening of family caregivers and the quality of the social assistance system, creating a counseling system, the inclusion of seniors in the area and institutions of lifelong education. These elements can be combined in one of the gerontological paradigms of long-lived history and its twentieth century exemplification, that is the concept of education for, in and through old age (Szarota, 2010:138-141).

Social participation can be defined through the analysis of various forms of participation, including:

¹⁶¹ Official Journal of the European Union, Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council 940/2011/UE of September 14, 2011 on the European Year for Active Aging and Solidarity between Generations, the thematic information [<http://europa.eu/ey2012/ey-2012main.jsp?langId=pl&catId=971>]

1. social participation: educational, cultural, including types of leisure, recreation and physical education, digital inclusion, including in particular: ongoing education - LLP - Grundtvig program, senior clubs, geragogic advising, prevention of aging and loneliness, educational projects, cultural and social projects, self-help - such as time banks, voluntary associations, unions, like the Federation of Associations (Nowy Sącz 2007) with the statement "Pact for seniors", retirement associations, such as the Polish Association of Pensioners and Disabled,
2. civic and political participation, such as the Council for Seniors' Policy, Seniors' Policy Department at the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Senior Citizens' Parliament - modeled on the Irish experience, Coalition for Healthy Aging "White Paper Healthy Aging", the Parliamentary Assembly for the Elderly Affairs and for the University of the Third Age, Group of Experts on Aging at the Ombudsman. In Poland, at local governments in 2013 functioned only 27 seniors' councils, including historically the first nine-person City Council of Seniors in Poznań - Resolution of the City Council of October 25, 2007 and the only such organization in the region of Małopolska – the Council of Seniors in Oświęcim, which was established in February 2012,
3. participation in the social division of labor (professional activation, re-integration, flexible forms of employment, including family caregivers, ongoing education of seniors, by which term we should understand also those people who are in the immobile professional age¹⁶²). This is a group with the lowest employment rate according to BAEL, with a specific situation on the labor market, made up of people over 50 years, i.e. the conventional limit generating the need for more support,
4. In addition, the need to strengthen the sector of nursing and care should be noted (system strengthening families, informal carers and educating the contract ones (Krawczyk, 2009:506), improving the quality and availability of community and institutional care, reinforcement of human resources and quality of geriatric and gerontological staff), the need to modernize the system of prevention and health care (promotion of patterns of healthy lifestyle, proper habits and patterns of behavior, better access to doctors, nurses, and physiotherapists specializing in geriatrics). A very important feature is the continuous improvement of the social welfare system, because although old age, as a phase of life is not a social issue and as such has no reference in the law on social assistance of 2004, it is necessary to strengthen environmental assistance to the most vulnerable beneficiaries, keeping older people in independent living as long as possible, ensuring dignity for the social welfare system beneficiaries, quick and widespread development of day care centers, developing family care homes. Finally, extremely important tasks face

¹⁶² See e.g.: *Program działań na rzecz promocji zatrudnienia, łagodzenia skutków bezrobocia i aktywizacji zawodowej osób w wieku niemobilnym PROGRAM 45/50 PLUS*, MPiPS (Program for the promotion of employment, alleviation of unemployment and occupational activation of older workers PROGRAM 45/50 PLUS, Ministry of Labor), Warsaw 2008.

social education and the media, which should foster social and cultural activity, counteract the negative and pseudo-positive stereotypes, forming a creative dimension of leisure activities, facilitate the integration of generations, and implement the demands of education for old age.

An important issue is to increase the number of specialists in the field of geriatrics, improving the quality of primary health care, which will help to reduce expenditures on the so called geriatric beds. The importance of many proposals on how to raise the sense of security, such as self-defense courses, more efficient and senior friendly uniformed services, organization of assertiveness trainings, courses on using city card and ATMs, advice on credit agreements, etc should be remembered.

“Silver Economy”, also and above all, brings particular challenges, necessities and consequences for the consumer market and the economy based on services. Individuals and the society must be prepared today to deal with an unprecedented size of the presence of seniors in the labor market and as consumers of goods and services. Social politicians should be advised to participate in the experiment “aging suit”, which consists in wearing a special diver’s uniform or suit loaded with lead shoe-soles, stiffened parts around the joints areas, ski gloves, goggles deforming the picture and ear-plugs which muffle natural outside noises. Alternatively, politicians should be invited to use a wheelchair. So equipped, they should be persuaded to get to do basic shopping at the nearest grocery store or to use the communal infrastructure while observing adaptation strategies for the free use of the retail and service offices, banks, transportation, health centers, generally speaking – the public space. Housing and public space leaves much to be desired (without architectural and transportation barriers, with the right infrastructure of housing taking into account the needs and capabilities of seniors).

A part of the economy which is constantly gaining in importance is the so called leisure industry. Retirees are carriers of almost inexhaustible resources of free time. The economy should therefore pay special attention to this group of consumers of services, because their financial resources are not small. Creatively arranged leisure time is primarily, besides the offer of cultural and educational institutions, tourism and recreation (Calypso, Senior Travel, Krakow’s Aqua Park offer for the senior card, senior discount ski passes for ski slopes, etc.) and food service (e.g. senior-friendly spaces, in which during a social gathering a coffee costs a symbolic 1 PLN) (Szarota, 2011:37-54). The media should finally see the interests of the elderly and present an offer to this group. Without a doubt, a commercial shown during the breaks of attractive programs of the “golden TV” and “golden radio” would increase profits of radio stations and producers. Also, fashion designers should look at the mature body styles, fashion houses would have an almost unlimited market.

Seniors locally - the development, integration and activation of seniors in the province of Małopolska

Małopolska seniority policy has a foothold in the created strategic documents¹⁶³. The most important of these is the "Strategy of the Małopolska Region 2011-2020" developed by the provincial government. It includes defined areas, objectives and policies of regional development, taking into account the problems generated by the process of aging of the society. Work continues on preparing 10 Strategic Programs, accompanying "Regional Strategy ...", among which four directly assign references to (pro) seniority policy with a view to 2020. These are:

- *Social Inclusion, Priority 4. The implementation of the regional strategy for action in the context of an aging population.* This program aims to improve the quality and availability of care for the elderly, in order to prolong their stay in their own environment, supporting active aging and combating stereotypes. There will be a development of the infrastructure of day care homes for the elderly. Families and caregivers of the elderly residing outside the system of stationary care will receive educational and counseling support through support groups (project "Academy of Senior Carer").
- *Intellectual Capital and Labor Market, Priority 4: Development of mechanisms for learning throughout life,* realized through the development of Universities of the Third Age.
- *Heritage and Leisure Time Industries, Priority 2: Stimulating creativity and increase of access to the offer of free time and Priority 4: From a healthy lifestyle to mastery at sports.* It includes an action plan for social inclusion of communities at risk of exclusion, including seniors, through participation in culture and physical activity.
- *Health Care, Priority 3: A holistic approach to medical care for the elderly,* with a number of specific actions, such as the creation of Małopolska Medical Center of Adulthood¹⁶⁴.

The Regional Center for Social Policy (ROPS) is consistently implementing projects successfully fit within the area of the analyzed issues. In 2000 it completed a pilot program for the elderly. The following programs were continued: *Provincial Policy and Assistance Program for Old Age for 2001-2003* and the *Provincial Policy and Social Welfare Program for Old Age for 2004-2006*. Currently, a project "Active Seniors" is implemented by ROPS¹⁶⁵. Moreover, the Centre is implement-

¹⁶³ Information based on the study: J. Noszka, *Wojewódzki raport informacyjny dotyczący udziału seniorów w życiu publicznym w Małopolsce*, materiał z Debaty *Udział seniorów w życiu publicznym województwa małopolskiego (Regional Information Report on the participation of senior citizens in public life in Małopolska, the material of the Debate: The participation of senior citizens in the public life of Małopolska province)*, in the structure of the project "Active senior - the best spokesman for his community," co-financed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy under Government Project for the Elderly Social Activity for 2012-2013, Krakow, May 7, 2013, typescript.

¹⁶⁴ Management Plan 2011-2020 Strategy of the Małopolska Region

¹⁶⁵ www.rops.krakow.pl

ing the project *Reorganization of nursing homes based on the Danish model*. Its main objective is to improve the conditions and quality of life for residents of nursing homes, mainly through training personnel of these units. Another project is a *Helping hand under a safe roof* addressed to welfare homes for the elderly in Małopolska. Its purpose is to enhance the quality of life through equipping and modernizing the homes and raising the level of service of the staff. The Regional Centre organizes numerous academic and popular science conferences. In November 2012 the first Congress of Social Policy in Małopolska entitled *(Do not) wait for old age - challenges for social policy in the face of demographic change* was held. The issues related to the fight against social exclusion of older people were discussed. ROPS regularly issues publications whose audiences are elderly people and gerontological staff of the social welfare system. These include handbooks like *A Guide Map of Assistance for 50+ and their Families, Information about Rights, Benefits and Services, Map for the Elderly, Ways to Work with Seniors*, a quarterly publication "esos" and numerous other publications.

Among the initiatives of the Regional Centre a number of general social competitions, such as offers of the execution of public tasks, including those that involve the support of the Universities of the Third Age are worth identifying. In a competition the provincial government subsidized 27 projects for a total amount of 500,000 PLN. Since 2006, a Małopolska plebiscite "OUTSIDE the Stereotype" – the Senior of the Year has been organized. The most active seniors in Małopolska are voted for. It is worth noting that this is a unique initiative in the country. Since 2011 at a ceremonious gala ROPS, as the subject of a self-governing province, in cooperation with the Municipality of Krakow has been promoting *Senior-Friendly Places*, i.e. public buildings, which, by recognizing the specific needs and abilities of seniors encourage retirees to enjoy the special offers (restaurants, cultural activities related to recreation and leisure). 50 places have already received appropriate certificates. These include pharmacies, shops, cafes, cultural institutions, educational, and recreational sites and public buildings (Drózdź, 2013). UTW in Chrzanów has undertaken similar initiatives.

As in the study prepared for a public debate in Małopolska says its author, Joanna Noszka¹⁶⁶: *An innovative media project on the regional scale was a social campaign entitled "Wiekowe zajawkowe" [...]. Its aim was to make a younger generation (Krakow students) more sensitive to the needs of the elderly, to strengthen intergenerational solidarity and to improve relations between the youth and the elderly. The campaign, which included 1.7 million people, modern tools of communication such as the internet, facebook, and citylighty were employed*¹⁶⁷. This campaign took the first place in the fifth edition of the Social Campaign of the Year 2012 contest in the

¹⁶⁶ J. Noszka, *Wojewódzki raport informacyjny dotyczący udziału seniorów w życiu publicznym w Małopolsce* (Provincial information report on the participation of senior citizens in public life in Małopolska), material prepared for a debate Seniors' Participation in Public Life in Małopolska, in the structure of the project "Active senior - the best spokesman for his community," co-financed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy under Government Project for the Social Activity for the Elderly for 2012-2013, Krakow May 7, 2013.

¹⁶⁷ www.facebook.com/WiekoweZajawkowe

category of local social campaigns “for the courage to use innovative forms and successful awakening of warm feelings in the recipients.”¹⁶⁸

The MANKO Association has been issuing in Krakow a magazine “Głos Seniora” (Voice of Seniors) since November 2012. The circulation is 15,000 copies, and its electronic version is available on Facebook and online at <http://www.glosseniora.pl/>.

Active Seniors in Małopolska

Thanks to the data accumulated by the provincial self-government we know that in 2009 there were in Małopolska 51 senior clubs. It is one of the most popular forms of social gathering for the elderly. Clubs are located in community centers, parishes or housing associations. They are also organized at social welfare centers (DDP and DPS).

In July 2012, there were 37 Universities of the Third Age (including those in villages!) The program of some of them is focused on the implementation of not only educational purposes. Founded by NGOs, religious organizations, local government and social institutions, they take actions to improve the quality of life of old people and enhance mutual help. It should be noted, however, that six districts in the Małopolska province still do not have their universities of the third age. Seniors can focus their activities around the *Academy of Active Seniors* in Nowy Sącz (it covers the districts of Nowy Sącz, Limanowa and Gorlice). The University of the Third Age in Nowy Sącz initiated a nationwide federation of the Universities of the Third Age and since 2007 Małopolska Forum of UTA has been held and, at the Economic Forum in Krynica sessions of the Forum of the Third Age (since 2009) have been organized.

Polish Union of Pensioners and Disabled (PZERI) operates in three districts of Kraków, Tarnów and Nowy Sącz and brings together around 200 bodies, i.e. the regional boards and circles.

Further examples of so-called ‘Good practices’ may be initiatives which belong to the coalition of the Krakow Pact for Seniors (Małopolska initiative of the Centre for Social Initiatives Support Office at the City Hall in Krakow). This includes among others: sections for older people at sports clubs - such as the initiative of the Sailing Club Horn, *Seniors under the Sails*, Senior Program in Aqua Park, the activities of the Polish Gymnastic Society “Sokół”, more than 10 years of work of the Association Academy of Fullness of Life (education, international projects), actions of Nowohucka Academy of Seniors, a number of senior clubs, senior discussion movie clubs, hospitality of the artistic cafe “Cafe C@roline”¹⁶⁹, the Villa Decius SAGA project (Fall 2012) aimed at education, integration and mobilization of people aged 50 + through creative workshops for older people: creative writing workshops, meetings of the literary salon, computer

¹⁶⁸ http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/aktualnosci,5681,konkurs_kampania_spoleczna_roku_2012_rozstrzygniety

¹⁶⁹ More: Z. Szarota, *Senior w wielkim mieście na przykładzie projektu: „Krakowski pakt dla seniorów”*. (Seniors in the City as in the project: “Krakow pact for seniors.”)

courses, and the Saga Club. A magazine published with a view to older readers, the "Głos Seniora" (Voice of Seniors) cannot go unnoticed. It has a circulation of 15,000 copies and is available on Facebook and at <http://www.glosseniora.pl/> (since November 2012).

Overview

The enemy of good, successful aging is a sense of uselessness, passivity, and helplessness, closing to the outside world and its problems. Man feels good when his life is predictable, and the living space available and secure. Older people want to be active, they increasingly enjoy the attractions of interesting and original leisure time activities. They expect a serious and responsible approach to the problems related to the specificity of this phase of life from social politicians and those who manage public spaces.

Social Activity of the Elderly

Introduction

Demographic changes have become an undeniable fact affecting Europe. The European Commission has published "The third Demography Report" in April 2011. The report claims that the proportion of population aged 65+ increased from 13.7% in 1990 to 17.4% in 2010. According to forecasts, by 2060 about 30% of the population of the EU will be more than 65. It is particularly important that the number of the "oldest of the old" - those aged 80 or more - is going to increase. It is predicted that the proportion of the EU population aged 80+ will grow four-fold during the period of 1990-2060. The effects of population aging will be felt in the whole of Europe. However, a recent study of the Committee of the Regions entitled "The activity of elderly people: local and regional solutions", clearly shows that this impact will have a significant regional aspect. In 2030, the percentage of the population aged 65 years and more will vary from 10.4% to 17.3% in particular regions.

A process of changes in the demographic structure has been taking place in Poland for several years, and a growing proportion of older people in the total population characterizes it. At the end of 2010, the Polish population amounted to 38.2 million people. In terms of economic groups of the population (0-17, 18-59/64, 60+ / 65+), the population in the pre-productive age accounted for 19%, productive - 64%, post-productive - 17%. At the same time, as a result of improved living conditions, the life expectancy of Poles has been increasing, for men born in 2010 it was 72.1 years and for women - 80.6 years. For the past 10 years, since 2000, the average life expectancy for men has increased by 2.4 years and for women, by 2.6 years. According to demographic projections of the Central Statistical Office (GUS), by 2035, the average life expectancy will have increased by approximately 8 years for men and by about three years for women.

Extending the average life expectancy makes the period of the next twenty years become the rapid process of the population aging. Even the averaged data do not allow ignoring the fact that these demographic changes may have significant social, economic and budget consequences. Higher values of the elderly demographic burden are associated with the challenges in the area of pensions, health care and other public services necessary for an increasing number of older people. These challenges are even more significant in today's economic and

financial context. It seems clear that the socio-economic models of the past 50 years will not cope with these changes. However, adaptation measures can help alleviate many of the worst fears about demographic changes. The concept of active aging involves providing an individual with the opportunity to be socially productive as long as possible. Social productivity is defined as any activity that produces goods and services, whether paid or not, including such activities as housework, childcare, volunteering, helping family and friends.

Active aging is therefore central to the European and Polish political agenda. Europe of 2020 – the EU development strategy for 2010-2020 aims to develop: the economy based on knowledge and innovation (intelligent economic development), more competitive resource-efficient and environmental economy (sustainable development), as well as socially and territorially coherent economy with a high level of employment (development promoting social integration). The target strategy involves the employment rate of 75% for those aged 20-64 and reduction of the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by at least 20 million by 2020. Achieving these goals will not be possible without active aging and solidarity between generations. Economic growth must result in new and flexible ways to help people to maintain longer employment and to benefit from the growing markets of products and services for the elderly. Sustainable development entails helping people to stay healthy and active at an elderly age, as it will enable us to avoid the overloading of public services. The development promoting social integration must be associated with a guarantee to ensure the capacity and quality of life for a growing population of older people.

Strategic document “The prospect of lifelong learning”

This document does not have the status of a development strategy. According to “The plan of arranging the development strategy”, it has the status of the so-called additional strategic document. It was prepared by the Interdepartmental Team for lifelong learning, including the National Framework of Qualifications based on international obligations, in particular under obligations arising from the establishment of the European Area of lifelong learning and recommendations of the EU Council on the Polish National Reform Program.

Strategy for the Development of Civil Society in the years 2009-2015

Strategy for the Development of Civil Society in the years 2009-2015 (SWRSO) is a long-term document aimed at shaping the process of the civil society development. SWRSO forms an instrument of the development policy in the development of pro-social behavior of local communities and building and strengthening structures of the civil society. The aim of SWRSO is to strengthen the citizens’ and their communities’ subjectivity and to create conditions for the development of public social institutions.

SWRSO assumes implementation of four priority areas:

- active, conscious citizens, active local communities,
- strong non-governmental organizations in a good condition,
- development of non-governmental organizations for social integration,
- development of social enterprise.

Among the main courses of action that are aligned with the objectives of the Program, we can include: the creation of infrastructure for local social activity, civic education, activation of citizens in public affairs, providing access to social services for excluded social groups and groups at risk of social exclusion (including the elderly), ensuring the establishment and functioning of mechanisms for comprehensive support of social integration, etc.

Strategy for Social Policy for 2007-2013

Social Policy Strategy (SPS) was adopted by the Council of Ministers on September 13, 2005. The purpose of the SPS is to build an integrated system of state policy leading to the facilitation of equal access to social rights for all citizens, improving the conditions for the establishment and functioning of families and supporting groups and individuals at risk of social exclusion while ensuring democratic participation of citizens. SPS has priorities that directly or indirectly will be implemented by the actions under the Program. These include:

- the implementation of active social policy,
- comprehensive rehabilitation and activation of people with disabilities,
- building a support system for people at post-productive age,
- activation and mobilization of local partners,
- public-social partnership as the basis for the development of social services.

The key courses of action of the Program include supporting the development of various forms of educational and social activation of welfare recipients, including volunteering, the development of a community information system based on local societies; increasing the access to protective services, promoting solutions to better social integration of people at post-productive age, promoting and strengthening neighboring communities for older people (within self-help); supporting various forms of self-organization and participation in a society, the development of activities supporting the ties among generations and strengthening a sense of responsibility of younger generations to care for the elderly; taking into account the needs for activation of older people in continuing education; increasing the participation of non-governmental organizations in the implementation of programs for the elderly and creating conditions for participation of the elderly in culture and leisure.

National Development Strategy 2007-2015

2007-2015 National Development Strategy (NDS) was adopted by the Council of Ministers on November 29, 2006. It is "a planning document setting out the basic conditions, objectives and directions of the country's social, economic and territorial development." It binds together all the development activities undertaken to improve socio-economic conditions. Its task is to program the country's development and modernization. The main objective of NDS is to raise the level and quality of people's life in Poland: individual citizens and families. The NDS has the following priorities:

- increasing the competitiveness and innovativeness of the economy,
- improving technical and social infrastructure,
- increasing employment and improving its quality,
- creating an integrated social community and its safety,
- development of rural areas,
- regional development and improvement of territorial cohesion.

NDS assumes an increase in the availability of social services, the development of lifelong learning / continuing education and the creation of a comprehensive system of care, activating and integrating older people in local communities.

Innovative projects, research and exchange concerning activity of the elderly and solidarity among generations are supported under the number of European funding programs. The European Union has declared 2012 the European Year for the Activity of the Elderly and Solidarity among Generations (ER2012). It is used as a framework for raising awareness, identification and dissemination of good practices and encouraging decision - makers and stakeholders at all levels to promote the activity of the elderly and intergenerational solidarity. The aim is to promote active aging in the area of: 1 employment; 2 participation in a society; 3 health and independence; 4 intergenerational solidarity. In addition, the European Commission launched a trial program of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on activity and health of the elderly. It will support the partnership between all relevant stakeholders to overcome barriers to the introduction of innovative solutions in the following areas: prevention and health promotion, integrated care and independent living of older people. It aims to enable the use of funding and investment in the innovation chain. By 2020, its overall aim is increasing the average life expectancy of healthy people in the EU by two years.

The greatest benefits connected to the activity of the elderly and promotion of intergenerational solidarity are for local and regional entities. As they are the only able to feel the specific challenges concerning an aging population and other factors bothering their communities and can face these challenges. At a local and regional level, the most basic services are provided to maintain the activity of the elderly. These are centers of training and education to enable activity for older people in areas such as employment, transport and urban infrastructure policy - elements necessary from the point of view of ensuring full participation

in social life, health care and long term care to support health and independence of the elderly.

One of the key factors affecting the quality of older people's life and society's well-being, in general, will be the degree to which local and regional authorities adapt to specific demographic changes. Intergenerational solidarity is especially important and is becoming a reality for the citizens at a local level. It is important, therefore, to enable local and regional entities to participate in meeting the challenges and objectives common in Europe. Seeking ways to support local and regional authorities on the national and European levels in promoting active aging and solidarity among generations, will be a real added value in terms of effective policy-making. Local and regional authorities can take advantage of numerous European funding programs, supporting the development of innovative practices, research and exchange of good practices and cooperation between regions. However, it is often difficult to find the right information. Examples of programs that support social activity of older people In August 2012, the Government Program for older people's social activity was created for the years 2012-2013. The inspiration for the program was the civic, public identification of problems of the elderly, resulting from the in-depth analysis and debate on social and demographic processes taking place in our country, against the long-term development challenges.

The program is a comprehensive venture, taking into account the areas and directions of support to achieve the main goal, which is to improve the quality and standard of living of the elderly for dignified aging through social activity. The program assumes practical inclusion of the sector of non-governmental organizations in activities involving seniors.

The legal basis for the program is Article 5c of the Act of 24 April 2003 on Public Benefit and Volunteer Work (Journal of Laws of 2010 No. 234, item. 1536, as amended).

Article 5c of the Act provides for the preparation of departmental and governmental programs by the minister responsible for the social security, after consultation with the Council of Public Benefit Activity, to support the development of non-governmental organizations and entities mentioned in Article 3 (.3) of the Act, and financial support for these programs, particularly through an open tender. The program takes into account the internal diversity of the older population, promotes activities aimed at maintaining active aging and ensuring their participation in social life and activities for people with reduced autonomy.

The aim of the program is to improve the quality and standard of living of the elderly (the Program defined an older person as a person over 60 years old) for the dignified aging through social activity. The program aims to contribute to a better use of the social and professional potential of the elderly, so that they can perform different social roles in public life. It is also important to include restrictions in the activities resulting from functional barriers that the elderly may be vulnerable to.

The main objective of the Program will be implemented by specific objectives:

Specific objective 1. Increasing diversity and improving the quality of learning opportunities for older people:

- creating offers corresponding to the problems of people in difficult situations;
- promoting new solutions to motivate older people to learn in order to stay active, especially older people at a disadvantage;
- creating conditions for the development of the educational and cultural offer.

Specific objective 2. Creating conditions for the inside- and intergeneration integration of older people, with the use of the existing social infrastructure, such as increasing knowledge on biological, health, social changes occurring with age, in the preparation of the society for aging.

Specific objective 3. The development of various forms of social activity, including the promotion of volunteerism, participation in decision-making processes in society, including the elderly in shaping public policy.

Specific objective 4. Increasing the accessibility, improving the quality of social services and supporting activities for self-help and self-organization:

- the development of support systems designed to meet specific needs of the elderly, in particular for older people with limited autonomy;
- the development of social services in the field of sport, tourism, recreation and culture.

During the implementation of the program (2012-2013), several points are assumed:

- financing the development and creation of new learning opportunities for older people, increasing access to educational activities within existing and newly created organizations, including disadvantaged areas, using existing educational and cultural infrastructure for the elderly;
- supporting various forms of education and learning to improve older people's skills, in particular digital skills and especially for people in a difficult situation;
- improving the quality of the staff involved in professional and voluntary social activity of the elderly;
- financing other forms of social activity of the elderly;
- increasing the supply and improving the quality of social services for the elderly, including the adjustment of the offer according to the needs and abilities of older people with disabilities or reduced mobility.

The program includes long-term component (system) and the short-term component (competitive), carried out periodically in 2012-2013.

I. The System Component

The long-term component will consist in developing a long-term policy objectives of seniority. It will be implemented in the office of the minister responsible for social security, in cooperation with other ministries, civil society organizations and the scientific and expert communities. The system component will take comprehensive steps to create a strategic foundation to the seniority policy. It will strictly refer to the existing strategic documents, making their supplement and extension in the range of activities for older people. Assumptions of the long-term seniority policy, developed in the open formula and in close

cooperation with interested entities, will be the answer not only to social challenges of an aging society, but they will also be the basis for the stimulation of the public policy (particularly in the area of social activity of the elderly).

II. The Competitive Component

Priority I. Education of the elderly - measures to improve the social activity of older people through various forms of formal and non-formal education, which allow for active involvement in the life of local communities. These activities enhance integration within generations of older people. (Directions of action: learning activities in various fields (such as law, economics, health, including preventive health, sport, tourism, new technologies), educational programs about aging, older people and active aging, preparatory classes for volunteer services, training of carers, promoting volunteerism of competences, promotion of learning among the elderly.)

Priority II. Social activity that promotes the inside- and intergeneration integration - involves the development of various forms of activities for older people with existing social infrastructure, including local cultural institutions (such as e.g. public libraries, community centers, theatres, museums). In addition, through cooperation between generations, these activities promote the mutual development of social skills also among the younger generation. (Directions of action: social activity, including senior volunteering, physical activity of the elderly, tourism and recreational activities of the elderly, activities in the field of culture, including involving different generations, social networking, including the inside- and intergeneration voluntary , anti-e -exclusion.)

Priority III. Social participation of older people - efforts to increase older people's participation in the society that will promote the development of the civil society. The role of organizations representing interests and needs of older people is important here, especially those that promote the involvement of seniors in the life of local communities. (Directions of action: forms of older people's activity in local communities (civil society development) activities supporting participation in social / public life, informative network of care and assistance (building a positive image of old age).

Priority IV. Social services for the elderly (external services) - activities for the development of various forms of support (in the formula of public-social partnership, including those implemented by non-governmental organizations operating in the public interest), by increasing the availability and quality of social services for the elderly, by increasing the involvement of volunteers and carers, creating an environment of self-help and increasing a network of trained volunteers. (Directions of action: training for volunteers and carers (helping the elderly), support for various forms of self-help, supporting families in looking after an older person by development of services based on voluntary activity, expanding access to social services such as care, culture, education, sports and tourism.)

Local and regional authorities can take many measures to promote the ability to find employment for the elderly and training initiatives aimed at improving skills and helping people in connecting current knowledge and expertise

with rapidly changing needs of the labor market. Another way to increase older people's activity in the area of employment is to promote and improve entrepreneurship among the elderly. The programs of European education and transnational cooperation may be useful here.

Examples of projects

Support for educational staff mobility (PAWT) - Extending working life (Co-financing: Grundtvig) The PAWT project created a comprehensive framework for the skills of older workers or potential workers. They are designed to support educators of adults, promote research competences and those in the ICT field among older people and they help to create a model of self-employment for such people. Their mission is to change attitudes related to education of older people and increasing their ability to find employment.

The PEOPLE project – Europe – wide network of employment and training for older people (Co-financing: Leonardo da Vinci) PEOPLE Network is a network of the best practices of the EU partner organizations aimed at fighting with discrimination on grounds of age and promoting employability for older people. Its purpose is to develop, offer, disseminate and discuss the best practices in the areas of research, promotion and development of the age diversity and their benefits to education and employment. It deals with the practical development of vocational training, general education programs for the elderly as well as advice and encouraging employers to different methods of recruitment and retention of older workers. Seniors' enterprise (Co-financing: Interreg IVB (The Atlantic Program)) The project is designed to encourage more people aged 50 and older to take part in entrepreneurial activity. The idea deals with such forms as: starting a business alone or with others, purchasing a company or investing in it, advising entrepreneurs and supporting innovation in the enterprises of others. It also aims at raising awareness of different ways in which people, aged 50 and older, can become involved in economic activities, as well as benefits of such involvement. The next and final example of seniors' activity, known in Poland for many years, is the University of the Third Age - this is an example of seniors' educational activity. UTA are institutions whose main purpose is to educate the elderly. It is a form of educational activity, which contributes to meeting seniors' needs such as: self-directed learning, learning about the environment, gaining knowledge and skills, performing socially useful activities, filling free time, maintaining social relationships, mental and physical stimulation, and sometimes even the possibility of implementing youthful dreams. Other objectives of the Third Age are: the development of intellectual, social, physical activity of the elderly, supporting the expansion of seniors' knowledge and skills, facilitating contacts with institutions such as health care, cultural centers, rehabilitation centers, engaging people in sport and tourist activities and working for their environment. They also play an important role in maintaining social ties and interpersonal communication among seniors. UTA, like volunteering, help to build social capital. Contact with other people and building relationships have a positive effect on the feeling of being needed, health condition, etc. Therefore, it is really important to engage older people in the society, for example through the local communities involvement.

UTA in Poland operate in a diverse organizational structure. There are those that operate under the auspices of the university and its structures, they are mostly led by the proxy of the university's master, appointed by the associations dealing with popular scientific activity, and others acting as a local government unit e.g. at community centers, libraries, day centers, welfare centers. Data from the National Federation of Associations of Universities of the Third Age and the All-Poland Alliance of Universities of the Third Age show that in Poland there are about 400 Universities of the Third Age, which conduct classes and lectures for about 70 thousand listeners. The World Health Organization (WHO) has published a guide that aims to help cities, local districts, regional authorities, social organizations, the private sector and citizens groups to identify where and how they can better respond to the needs of their aging population. It contains a series of checklists to ensure instruments for evaluating themselves, as well as a map to draw the progress in the following areas: places outside buildings, transport, housing, social participation, respect and social integration, civic participation and employment, communication and information, community support and health services. Many cities and towns across the EU are already taking part in the Program of WHO Towns friendly to the elderly.

Counseling in the Light of the Needs of Seniors

Introduction

The contemporarily changing social reality concerns all its members. This obvious statement is particularly reflected in the conditions of functioning of the elderly, because they are the part that links the constantly changing present time with the world of more traditional attitudes and norms, with the world of the past.

Elderly people and the old age as a stage of human life are increasingly becoming the subject of scientific discourse, which results from the vastly progressive aging of the population, which is reflected by the increase in the number of elderly people in the surrounding community. Undoubtedly, the preparation for the old age and prevention of its premature negative effects becomes more and more essential, which is the subject of gerontological prevention activities.

Therefore, the questions that appear concern the situation of the elderly. Where is their place in the modern world? What are their needs and what they can offer to the younger generation? The inevitable process of aging causes that the above questions are becoming the issue not only undertaken by sociologists, but also educators and psychologists. Demographic changes trigger the demand for the types of care and assistance activities, which have been treated more peripherally so far. The growing number of seniors indicates that in the near future, they will become the large group that will have specified needs and they will require the fitted impacts that will be aimed at increasing the comfort of their living.

The specific evolution in the age structure of the society indicates the direction of changes in the expectations of the public regarding services, support and assistance. Considering counseling in the context of the needs of elderly people, we would like to discuss on how satisfied or unsatisfied needs affect the quality of life for seniors, how to help them by means of counseling, and which areas require the work of advisors.

Seniors in Poland

In the literature on the subject, it is notable that few authors use the expression “old people”. In Polish, it has rather confusing connotations, because the old age is associated with a certain inability, disease, dependency. Stereotypes shape not only the image of elderly people, but they also define in a “diplomatic” way the period, which after all is a natural part of human life. With greater ease, the scholars use the word “senior”, because it appears to not have such a troublesome overtone. Perhaps it results from the fact that “in the times of universal constant worship of youth and fitness, it is difficult to determine the age, at which the old age begins”(Hryniewicz, 2012:11).

The social image of the elderly is similar to the image of the old age as a phenomenon, unwanted, adjourned over time, associated with something undesirable, inevitable and therefore, sensed as more painful. Such “troublesome” old age is accompanied by a personal sense of anxiety, but it can also be perceived as the economic burden for the society. It is the period of withdrawal from social roles and the time of difficulties in adapting to new conditions of life.

The needs of elderly people

The needs of elderly people are largely determined by their age, and thus, by their roles in the society. The old age is the period of retirement and the resulting change in the pace of life. This is the important change that is only the beginning of further transformations in their lives.

The result of the study by W.Wnuk is the fairly consistent list of needs of the elderly. The author mentions among them the following:

- the need to perform socially useful activities
- the need to be acknowledged as a part of the society, community, group, and the performance of a certain role in it
- the need to fulfill, in a satisfactory manner, the increased volume of time
- the need to maintain normal social relations
- the need to be recognized as a human being
- the need to create opportunities and occasions for self-expression and having a sense of achievement
- the need for adequate psychological and mental stimulation
- the need for protecting health and the access to health care
- the need for a properly set lifestyle and maintaining relationships with family
- the need for spiritual satisfaction.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ <http://kutw.kpswjg.pl/witryna1/wnuk.htm>

Counseling, assistance, support

Although the definition of counseling stems from the common understanding of the word, the essence of counseling as the human activity should be captured. "Counseling is very often associated with the work of a psychologist and activities that are professional, specified to the people who are in a crisis, with developmental difficulties, or emotional or adaptive problems." (Skałbana, 2009:20).

In the context of such an approach of counseling, the question is raised of whether the old age is a period in which the people who have not benefitted from professional psychologists and educators can turn to this kind of support? The answer may be twofold, on the one hand, the lack of habits can be a hindrance in undertaking new activities, on the other hand, old age is also the time of maturity, the time in which seniors are willing to share their experience, knowledge, they seek contact with others, and often feel lonely. The equally essential role in the recourse to advice may be also played by a sense of helplessness and confusion in new situations that are associated with social roles.

Family

"Family is one of the most important fields of human activity, as well as the autotelic value of and significant reference group for the old man, it meets his basic social needs." (Wawrzyniak, 2009:114). However, the role of elderly people is often limited to the role of grandparents who look after grandchildren when their parents are working. The caring role has a definite educational value, because grandparents are the irreplaceable source of knowledge, models and standards, whose parents do not provide. The role of grandparents becomes an extension of the role of parents, the involvement in the education of the younger generation can become a source of joy and satisfaction. The role of grandparents can also be satisfactory, because it is different from the role of parents in terms of the participation in intergenerational transmission. However, the complete fulfillment in this area is implemented in non-overloading older generation and not burdening grandparents with too many responsibilities. A grandfather or grandmother cannot replace a "babysitter" or a "substitute mother", who exercises the majority of responsibilities connected with care and education of the youngest generation.

Therefore, it seems that the counseling in this area should include not only the elderly, but mainly parents. Hence, the pedagogical education should be accomplished through the awareness of the need to start the procedures for communication and cooperation in the field of education of children, but without the excessive burden of the generation of seniors.

Counseling towards the need to overcome the difficulties of old age

The third age is the period that can be difficult in many respects. The dimensions in which the obstacles appear can be divided into three: biological, psychological and social (Grudziński, 2012:47). In terms of the biological dimension, physiological changes appear that have considerable influence on the functioning of the individual. Although they are dependent on genetic factors or individual living conditions, they are naturally inscribed into this period of life. Less physical fitness, somatic changes, lowered immunity, fatiguability not only can contribute to lowering the standard of living, but they also influence the psychological disposition of the individual.

Changes in the mental functioning of the individual often involve unpleasant experiences, triggered by the loss of the beloved people or changes in personal life. Aging is also accompanied by changes associated with memory, which are often a source of tension and helplessness. However, it cannot be forgotten that seniors feel the intensive need related to the functioning within the family, such as the need for security and support.

The third dimension involves changes in the social functioning. These also seem to be inevitable due to retirement, and thus, the necessity for reorganization of life. The adaptation to new situations may occur in different ways, it is usually "performed much worse, if, except of professional duties, a man has not conducted any social activity, has not met non-professional obligations, has not held any other duties – including house chores." (Wawrzyniak, 2009:25). The maintenance of the level of activeness means the maintaining of a sense of being needed, finding joy and pleasure in life, a sense of fulfillment, which gives a person the sense of living life to the fullest, and not on the edge.

Range of counseling for seniors

Counseling directed to the elderly is the impact of a particular kind. Taking into account the specific problems of seniors, a number of issues that this interaction should apply to can be determined.

1. The awareness of the bright side of the old age, learning self-acceptance, developing a new identity.

The first and main issue that appears in the counseling situation in this respect is the moment when it takes place. Aging is a natural process, however, we are occasionally unprepared for it (especially in the light of the overwhelming cult of youth). The changes in professional and family life are often accompanied by anxiety or even fear, which should be resolved during the counseling. The manifestation of support, the exchange of ideas or views should be aimed at the acceptance of life period in which we are, but also the acceptance of a new identity of seniors. The counselors should take into account the specificity,

which is implied by the life experience and wisdom, which allows the counseling situation to be perceived as “the encounter with an elderly person.” Naturally, the age difference results in the necessity of adjusting the counselor’s communication and behavior to the patient, but it must be remembered that the patient is not the only person in a difficult situation, but the invaluable source of knowledge, and, through the contact with an elderly patient, the counselor can also gain new values.

2. Encouraging to activity and activation of the elderly

J. Wawrzyniak highlights the relation between the intensity of the roles performed throughout life and the experience of old age (Wawrzyniak, 2009:131). Factually, it seems that being active is an important component of full functioning in the old age, and counseling should aim at encouraging to undertake tasks in many fields. According to Andrzej Grudziński, the following types of seniors’ activities can be distinguished:

- activity at home and with family
- cultural activity
- social activity
- educational activity
- religious activity
- recreational activity (Grudziński, 2012:55).

Activation is a concept that refers to the restoration of the activity of the elderly in participation in social life. Initiatives such as the organization of leisure time, formation of groups of seniors, encouraging the participation in Universities of the Third Age also provide the opportunities for self-development, shaping proper self-esteem.

Activation of seniors is also included in the creation of groups that would be aimed at giving support and mutual assistance. Meeting people at a similar age, not only protects against the sense of loneliness, it facilitates acknowledging each other, the exchange of feelings, thoughts, becoming aware of various opportunities for self-development and activity.

3. Coping with crises

The old age is the time when crises of various kinds appear. These are both personal crises (e.g. related to the state of health), but also the crises that may be associated with traumatic situations, the loss of a spouse, the diminishing number of friends and peers. In such situations, it appears to be advisable to use the support strategy and apply to the group counseling. It seems that the exchange of experiences, showing and receiving support, can reduce the deficits that are not reduced by the individual counseling.

4. Preparation for the old age

This includes both social and psychological preparation for the future operation as a senior, but also the social preparation (which would aim at ensuring adequate living conditions, access to medical healthcare, etc.). Preparation for the old age also involves cultural and intellectual preparation that should be understood as “activities directed at the rational planning of leisure time, enrichment of human life with spiritual values, new experiences, nurturing old and acquiring new interests.” (Grudziński, 2012:56).

5. Action for shaping positive attitudes towards aging and elderly people

The stereotype of seniors in contemporary Poland is combined with the fear of loneliness, helplessness, and poverty. Also, an alarming thing is the fading of respect for the elderly, the specific recognition of them that, on the one hand, would be an expression of respect due to their age, on the other hand, the appreciation of their experience. In shaping the positive attitude towards the old age of oneself and other people, the main concern is not to push old people into the margins of social activity (and thus, the society), to put the emphasis on the activation of seniors and the recognition of the advantages of the old age. This attitude has another significant value – it eliminates the fear of old age, it allows accepting it as a natural part of human existence.

Counseling for seniors in the virtual world

The Internet is the new environment in which people, including senior citizens, function. Even though it would seem that the virtual world is the environment primarily for young people, it turns out that seniors have found their place in it. There are portals created by and addressed to elderly people (e.g. senior.pl), in which they can find interesting information, not only about the problems that they face because of their age, but also news concerning entertainment, health, and fashion. These actions appear to be desirable and appropriate. More than this, the Internet is also an environment where assistance can be found. This type of support is specific in many respects, it is anonymous, often being the information rather than therapeutic service. Moreover, as the online contact lacks many features of a direct meeting, it is frequently difficult. The great advantage of this type of aid is its accessibility and scope.

Via the internet, it is possible to provide the assistance concerning:

- coping with a difficult family, partnership, life or personal situation,
- coping with the disease of oneself or the beloved ones (...),
- solving personal problems (...),
- prevention from threats and the assistance in coping with anxiety behavior and aggression,
- shaping of the adequate self-evaluation, learning of self-acceptance and being oneself (Skalbania, 2009).

Third Age Universities as the institutions providing counseling for the elderly

The Universities of the Third Age, by many authors of the literature on the subject, are regarded as the institutions providing broadly understood counseling in terms of the elderly.

Many students of the Universities of the Third Age have pointed to the need for the formation of a psychotherapeutic group, which would be helpful with the depression associated with the death of a close person, the inability to cope with the routine of everyday life, the lack of the ability to establish relationships with people, the lack of self-esteem and the meaning in life, experienced by the elderly (Wnuk, 2002:119).

In the context of elderly people, there are two trends in counseling: instrumental and existential counseling. The division is the result of person's adherence to the world, that is the world of things concerning the mechanisms of regulation of the outside world and the spiritual world – the world of values, resulting in the search for the meaning in life.

The instrumental counseling solves the problems connected with human behavior in the situations understood as changing and challenging conditions of the social environment. These are related to raising awareness, improving efficiency, skills and social competencies. Instrumental counseling is useful in seeking answers to the questions: "What to do?" and: "How to do it?" On the other hand, existential counseling helps to answer the questions: "What to live for?" "What to do it for?", "Why am I behaving like this?" (Wnuk, 2002:123).

Whereas in practice it is difficult to separate instrumental problems from existential problems, in the old age the second type of counseling, that is the existential counseling, is of particular importance due to various problems faced by the elderly.

The main problem of the old age is a problem of existential difficulty, expressed in the lack of desire to live and act, lack of the acceptance of one's fate, the experience of emptiness in life, no joy of life, a sense of its low value, hostility against the world and even against oneself, often disturbed relations with the closest family. Throughout the old age, people experience the so-called extreme experiences, causing existential fears arising from suffering and death. In this regard, the internal maladjustment of the individual, disharmony concerning psychic experiences is noticeable (Wnuk, 2002:122).

O. Czerniawska stresses the need to take certain actions in the organization of counseling for the elderly:

- the support in the organization of leisure time, since the properly spent time will facilitate solving other problems. Finding the appropriate areas of activity corresponding to their interests and skills can bring life satisfaction. The important role is played by the counseling, which inspires the learning at home,
- the initiation of actions of elderly people for the benefit of other elderly people. The attribute of the peer counselors is their own experiences, which authenticate the possibility of providing assistance,

- the organization of family counseling, addressed to adult children and relatives caring for the elderly person,
- the organization of the counseling regarding retirement,
- the organization of the social and economic counseling including such assistance as the exchange of an apartment, choosing the institution that takes care of the elderly person, counseling regarding the security of their savings (Czerniawska, 1995:194-195).

In the literature on the subject, it is emphasized that counseling is situational, the need for it appears when there are problem situations, or it is expected that such situations might occur.

Counseling in the aspect of elderly people is defined as the planned or occasional efforts made to help in the achievement of a specific task of the individual or institution. Counseling involves the assistance for the adult in resolving problems that they cannot solve and decide on the appropriate course of action (*Encyklopedia oświaty i kultury dorosłych*, 1986:235-236).

According to O. Czerniawska, counseling for the elderly focuses on the following issues:

- the problems arising from the aging process and the perception of oneself as old,
- constructing the life plan, the reorganization of life throughout the post-parental period, widowhood in old age, when the choice of life activity needs to be made,
- the assistance in maintaining mental fitness, the exercise of memory, physical efficiency, moral and social development (Czerniawska, 1995:194-196).

A. Kargulowa notices the need for counseling for adults in culture. Recalling the discussion by M. Mead concerning the post-figurative culture, it is claimed that the sources of counseling should be sought in it. If the basic principles of counseling are defined, we will inevitably come to the conclusion that its roots lie in the post-figurative culture, that is in the culture, in which children learn primarily from their parents. Currently, the situation is reverse, because we are stuck in the present, for which the understanding of the past events, current interpretations of past experiences and hopes for the future have failed to prepare us. This is the excellent situation for counseling, because everybody is helpless and, sooner or later, they all will be the beneficiaries of the counseling process (Kargulowa, 2002).

Conclusion

In the contemporary world, dominated by youth and its determinants, elderly people frequently feel isolated and marginalized within the community, in which they operate. The marginalization undoubtedly stems from the existing rules of the social order, which is determined by the contemporary culture, favoring the cult of youth, strength and vitality. Still, the old age, understood as

a phase of human life, can also be full of activity and work of seniors in the case of creating appropriate conditions and opportunities.

Highly significant institutions that enable the education and active functioning of elderly people, and thus, they counteract the marginalization and exclusion are the Universities of the Third Age, whose objectives are focused on intellectual and social activation, as well as engaging in the support by means of various forms of counseling.

Gatherings of the Third Age University students are extremely necessary, as they allow for common bonds, contacts, they broaden one's knowledge of various spheres of life, science and culture. All of this is absolutely necessary to maintain good physical and mental health and prevent routine, nostalgia and monotony of everyday life. This is certainly a panacea for good disposition, but without the use of pharmacological medication. In the old age, such treatment is especially important, so that a man would not feel moved into the margins of society (Surówka, 1998:12).

The old age is a valuable stage of life, and seniors can have a considerable impact on it, together with the appropriate support, both on the part of the broadly comprehended social policy, as well as people among whom elderly people function.

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Psychological Determinants of Creative Longevity of Seniors

*The fact that people aged 70-75 are still
in good physical and mental condition
should restrain us from considering
this age as the natural limit of human life*

I. I. Mechnikov

Nowadays, highly developed countries observe an increase in the human lifespan, prolongation of old age, which covers about three decades. As for Ukraine, one in five is an elderly person (over 60), and the percentage of octogenarians is increasing. Hence, one of the main research directions for psychogerontologists is the problem of ensuring the quality of life for a person in the late period of ontogenesis.

Recently, more and more psychological literature focuses on the period of late adulthood as “developmental age” (L. Antsiferova, O. Krasnova, A. Filozop, V. Slobodchikov).

The wellbeing of an elderly person is identified by a number of factors determined by their physiological state of existence (physical ability to “exist”), mental state (adequate world perception, activity of cognitive and emotional processes), social state (social demand, communication), personal maturity (willingness to develop), mode of life, mental model of old age, active creative activity, which assimilates in itself all existential states in life dimension “I am” or “I want to be”.

According to the realities of late adulthood, it should be mentioned that the possibility of further personality development in this period of life is ambiguous and does not apply to all of the age-related population. It is determined by regressive evolution of physical and mental existence of a personality, gradual loss of their vitality, various potentials of their lifetime achievements. Consequently, we consider the category of mentally stable elderly people who are physically and mentally able to realize their creative potential in their final period of life,

and whose "sense of life is developing" (I. Mechnikov) more and more at an old age. Among these people, the following three groups are singled out:

1. People whose creative potential has not been gained (or it is low) during ontogenesis. Hence, they have a nihilistic attitude to creative activity in the late period of life as creativity has not become a motivational and rational component of their personality.
2. People whose creative potential ceased to develop either at previous stages of ontogenesis or in the post-retirement period.
3. People (artists, scholars, high-ranking employees, politicians) who developed and gained high creative potential during the previous age-related stages of life and for whom creative activity has become a component of their personality. They continue working fruitfully in the late period of ontogenesis.

The peculiarity of a person's subjectness at the late stages of ontogenesis consists in the perspective of special age-related development to the level of dignity and the wisdom of age.

One of the main factors of a personality's progressive development during the period of gerontogenesis is creative nature of their mode of life. V. Frankl states: "A person leading a fruitful life does not become senile; on the contrary, their mental and emotional qualities developed in the process of life remain though their physical strength weakens" (Франкл, 1997:256). It is a personality's ability to see life from different points; to detect latent possibilities of different situations; to perceive ambiguity of life circumstances as an opportunity to develop; to experiment with new social roles.

At an old age, the value of human life often does not decrease, but increases as much as an elderly person continues participating in the life of the society. The level of preservation, degradation or senility is the function not only of the age, but also of the social and labor activity; i.e. it is the product not only of ontogenetic evolution, but also of a person's life journey as a personality and an actor. "Creation of individuality and its determining the only direction for the development of an individual, personality, and subject in the general structure of a person stabilize this structure and are essential factors of great vitality and longevity" (Ананьев, 2001:91).

Life experience, individual qualities, and level of talent, which are inherent to a person, form own mechanism of compensation and adaptation to age-related changes and determine the level of their creative activity. The physical condition of elderly people depends a lot on their psychological wellbeing: elderly people who are optimistically minded and involved in their affairs feel much better than those focusing on their own misery only. Creative personalities go through their ageing more easily – they have their favorite pursuit and gained wisdom.

Physical weakness makes the spirit rise. The factor of "life quality" at an old age is meant here. It can be reached only in the case of wise attitude to one's own temporality where, in the first place, the state of existence "here and now" is actualized when the past does not arouse regret, and the future – despair. The

productive old age is always acceptance of this age without dramatic “clinging” to the model of “eternal youth” (Рехтшафен, 1997:237).

Based on the regulatory possibilities of brain, N. Bekhtereva remarks that “two extremes in the brain activity – strive for world perception and automation – form a person’s functional brain.”

She continues: “The main mechanism of preserving the brain in the history of species and individual is the generalized reaction of the brain to any changes, to any novelty...As a consequence, organs undergo atrophy without any activity...” (Бехтерева, 2007:400). That is why it is necessary for retired people to have an opportunity to deal with the matter important for them, as “passive existence turns them into slow death”¹⁷¹.

B. Ananyev shows that reflections on the issues connected with the sense of life have an essential impact on the description of the final stages of life. In the author’s opinion, the paradox of the end of life lies in the fact that “dying” of forms of human existence occurs before “physical deterioration” at an old age, which leads to a personality’s degradation under conditions of narrowing the sense of life. Thus, in terms of duration of life fruitful stages, it is most favorable for individuals to have some program, purposes in life.

It is essential for an elderly person to be aware of life, which is more typical of highly educated people. Besides, special attention should be devoted to general positive personal and social identity and competence of a personality, i.e. their ability to cope with life tasks and to accept their role, as well as the nature of relations with other significant people. Psychological attitude to old age is no doubt crucial. Old age syndrome or ageism is an aging “social program”. A person entering their 70s may fail to cope with this age boundary. As life expectancy in Ukraine is 70 years (according to the data of the State Statistic Service), an elderly person “tries on” this standard and “surrenders” to the prevailing social standard – “old age.” Unquestionably, this speeds up involitional processes characterized by physical and mental deterioration, loss of vital energy that is more and more difficult to sustain.

The stage of late adulthood makes an elderly person face the task of structuring and sharing experience. Positive evolution at an old age is possible only when an elderly person realizes their gained creative experience in significant work where they would introduce part of their own individuality. Replication of creative experience as well as own wisdom makes an elderly person important for the community in which they live, and provides connection with the society at the generation level (transfer of experience).

One of the best books in the history of culture is Cicero’s “On Old Age”, which he wrote at the age of 84. Arguing with people who are afraid of old age, he states, “Any age is difficult for people who have no internal resource of happiness, but old age, as an inevitable law of nature, is not evil for those who derive all their felicity from themselves.” He emphasizes that at an old age the most effective weapon is sciences and exercises in valor, which, if respected at

¹⁷¹ В.Э Франкл, .Психотерапия и экзистенциализм. Избранные работы по логотерапии. www.koob.ru.

previous stages of life, pay off after long productive life, and do not leave a person at its very end.

According to Cicero, "...people have four reasons to be afraid of old age: first – old age hinders activity; second – it makes a body weak; third – it deprives of pleasures; fourth – it draws death closer." Opposing his environment, he brings forward his counterarguments. "Firstly, an old person performs better and more in comparison with the young not by means of muscle strength and body lightness, but by means of wisdom, authority, decisions, which multiply at an old age. Secondly, memory grows old only when a person does not work on their development. Thirdly, absence of pleasures at an old age (here pleasure of the youth are meant) opens up more possibilities for the mind, concentration on important matters" (Цицерон, 1974:136). Hence, his advice to people who have entered the late period of life is to support mind and spirit, to struggle against laziness as well as to take care of their own health. Cicero recommends wise old people to communicate with the young, and there should be reverse desire among the young to cooperate in order to support their old age.

Despite the fact that motivation decreases with age, which is connected with the change of direction (strengthening of family roles), it is different (or less noticeable) with creative personalities (scholars, artists, etc.), for whom intrinsic motivation (interest in work) is typical. The whole motivational structure of a creative personality stabilizes in adolescence or early adulthood; it becomes tolerant of ageing. Concerning a creative personality, the growth and expansion do not weaken during whole life time due to a wide circle of interests, high social status and anticonformism in many cases (Бодалев, Рудкевич, 2003:235).

Consequently, representatives of scientific and artistic creativity who defend progressive views often keep a high potential up to the end of life. "Any creative activity," according to V. Frankle, "has a great intrinsic value filling elderly people with the sense of own existence despite their age" (Франкл, 2000:240).

An important factor in realizing a personality's creative potential at an old age is their involvement in various interests and diverse activity. In compliance with Ketsler's principle of bisociation as well as B. Kedrov's studies, interests and activities, which go beyond the bounds of narrow professional ones, make it possible to go to some distance in order to "switch on" new vision (new resource) to solve an "old" problem and to see it in perspective.

Wide field of interests, erudition increase creative potential in activity. Agility and mobility of interests and forms of activity are extremely weighty. As R. Davis states, "Passivity at an old age and deprivation of everything that inspires is not rest but the way to grave" (Дэвис, 2006:277). Agility is the factor contributing to high preservation of creative potential in the second half of a personality's life, opening a way to new methods of expressing creative ideas.

A retired person faces possibilities of active pastime: reading favorite books, studying foreign languages, gardening, mastering some kind of art (choreography, fine art, handicraft, needlework, etc.), implementing creative plans, which were not carried out or completed at the previous stages of ontogenesis. Increase in creative potential is also caused by shifting to a related sphere if this sphere, which a person becomes involved in, has passed its culmination point before.

A personality's potential can be realized in two directions – outwardly, creating the external world necessary for human existence, and inwardly, complicating their inner world, human self-governing structure, their state of mind, personality itself.

Taking into account the outer side of realization of a personality's creative potential, it should be mentioned that besides their personality creative potentialities, peculiarities of activity itself are laid over. The operationalization of this activity requires constant transformation of thinking (knowledge and skills) under conditions of varying society, which put a personality under difficult life conditions. On the one hand, the need for creative self-actualization is often replaced by the need for "survival" as well as defending their capability to undertake professional activity, own creative work. On the other hand, it is a question of social environment (political, cultural, scientific, etc.) where people are united in an organization under the guidance of a senior person when the leader's potential becomes stronger at the expense of their followers' potential.

As regards the internal direction of a personal potential realization, the biological resource (formation of body and psyche) is permanently present as heredity providing resistance to ageing of the nervous system in highly talented people plays an important role. At the same time, the deceleration of ageing processes is caused not only by genetic factors, but also by a person's lifetime achievements in the process of their individual development.

A personality's realization of their creative potential is closely connected with individual psychological peculiarities (temperament, character) as well as such social factors as social experience (including creative experience) and direction, which will largely determine their abilities, realization area and efficiency.

One of the determinants of the development of a personality's creative potential during gerontogenesis is optimum relationship between their possibilities and desires. If possibilities mainly represent individual and personal characteristics, which comprise cognitive achievements during ontogenesis, creative abilities (gifts), etc., as well as physical and mental ability allowing a personality's development at the final stage of life, then desires form a socio-cultural layer of needs and claims of social nature, in which an elderly person exists.

Hence a person considers themselves as an active and required member of society or vice versa (society is not interested). On the other part, many elderly people have no need for creative self-actualization, which is the evidence of failure to gain creative potential or extinct need for this in the late ontogenesis.

The factors influencing the decrease in motivation for creativity in late ontogenesis include:

1. Mental and physical decay. It is a question of a personality's energy potential when their stamina is exhausted and an elderly person concentrates on main vital needs, which fall within the competence of medical and social services.
2. Dominance of agitation and uneasiness (typical of late adulthood) over expansion and development (typical of young and middle age). An elderly person is unable to reconstruct, reorganize their life; their purpose is to maintain the previous status.

3. Change in the dominant structure of motivation. The decrease in productivity of creative work at an old age is explained by the change in direction and leading motivation in this period. The need for family relations, close relationship where the focus on family prevails deepens.
4. Motivational stagnation, reduction of creative (or play) reasons for activity. In the process of a personality's individual development, play components (prevailing at a young age) are reduced giving way to labor components, which leads to a reduction in creative components of activity (Бодалев, 2003:235).

Consequently, realization of a personality's creative potential in the period of late adulthood depends on a number of factors including:

1. Developed subjectness. It is a question of the development of a personality as a subject of creative activity where its creative element initiates the process of a personality's self-actualization during gerontogenesis;
2. A personality's creative activity, which manifests itself in their readiness for creative activity in late ontogenesis, for realization of the need for creative work;
3. Creative experience as lifetime creative achievements during ontogenesis;
4. Developed personal qualities, i.e. integration of abilities, character, and orientation;
5. Developed cognitive qualities, which enable rational, mnemonic, perceptual, emotional-volitional and other psychical processes;
6. Energy potential as energy reserve of body (physical ability) and psyche (mental ability), which enables creative self-actualization in late ontogenesis;
7. Personal relevance, which is expressed in the social demand for creative work (creative product) of an elderly person;
8. Appropriate social life conditions as a personality's "comfort zone" where relevant conditions of creative work (provided everyday life, financial security) are satisfied;
9. Family environment, which could realize the need for love, protection and facilitate creative activity of an elderly person;
10. Cooperation of an elderly person with rising generation.
11. Continuing education enabling productivity of cognitive processes as well as ability to live and move in time, which will secure duration of an elderly person's ability to work and their vitality.

Developing the problem of a personality's life and activity efficiency, A. Bandura singles out a number of abilities based on self-reflective processes, in the structure of "self-efficacy". If during the lifetime a personality developed the integral of such abilities as positive self-appraisal, conviction about own efficacy and effectiveness, a personality has a "positive self-effective thinking", which is a prerequisite for a person's effective activity during their whole life. It results in formation of a "producer of one's own life", where self-belief makes it possible to shape that person's own future. Accordingly, in order to allow a personality to be a subject of their own life creative activity, to withstand misfortunes while developing creative activity and survival, it is necessary, firstly, to apply the

principle of a person's development as a subject; secondly, to raise the problem of "psychological provision" of a personality's possibility to be an effective, successful actor (Анцыферова, 2000:428). A significant motivational and cognitively oriented role in constructing a new lifestyle on a pension is given to transformation of a personality's inner world, the core of which is consciousness and reflexive processes. Thus, to lead a fruitful life in late ontogenesis, a personality must have faith in themselves and self-belief. Finally, as V. Frankl states, "A person is not free of conditions, no matter whether their nature is biological, psychological, or sociological. But a person is free and will always be free to take up an appropriate position on these conditions; one is always free to change one's attitude to them. A person is free to rise over somatic and psychic determinants of their existence. In that way a person discovers a new dimension, enters the noetic sphere, which denies separation of somatic and psychic phenomena. One is able to take up a position on the attitude not only to the world, but also to oneself"¹⁷².

The famous Canadian writer Davies Robertson who lived and worked creatively for 82 years remarks, "Yes, I'm old..., doing what I did all my life and I see no reason to stop. I'm not tired, I have ideas, and writing was always my main activity in the world" (Дэвис, 2006:277).

In the developed democratic society, elderly people must find their own place and new possibilities. Activity aimed at achieving life goals – social or political activity, intellectual or creative search, communication with friends or young people – can make old age meaningful.

It is impossible to consider all potentials of a personality to be "exhausted" in the process of individual ageing. Here the following question should be decisive: "Does a person's activity arouse a strong desire to exist for somebody or something despite their old age?" (Дэвис, 2006:277).

But social security is important here: absence of social and natural cataclysms, minimum accommodation facilities, affluent old age, and opportunity to receive medical aid in case of illness.

At an old age, creative activity in late ontogenesis will guarantee internal integrity and new social relations; increase vitality at the cost of a spurt, sense of own ability and productivity; optimize psychophysiological, emotional, intellectual, and personal reserves; help to sustain a personality in the final stage of life. Here the specific tasks of psychotherapy are to overcome social isolation, to raise a person's self-esteem, to create conditions for further actualization of their life experience; to realize their creative potential in the late period of ontogenesis. A personal approach to realization of creative potential in the period of late ontogenesis makes it possible to actualize an elderly person's subjective activity by stimulating their self-determination, self-appraisal concerning their attitude to the past as well as to the present. Consequently, counseling should be determined by individual peculiarities of an elderly person's course of life, specificity of late ontogenesis, and the level of their mental and physical ability.

¹⁷² В.Э Франкл. Психотерапия и экзистенциализм. Избранные работы по логотерапии. www.koob.ru.

Creative Activity as Seniors' Manifestation of Openness to New Experiences

Introduction

Old age is the most complex phase of life, not subject to rules, because it depends on the previous phases of life (childhood, adolescence and adulthood), which were different. In fact, it is difficult to specify when old age begins, as a phenomenon subject to self-awareness. The rhythm of development, similar to the rhythm of seasons, is a necessity. Old age and death cannot be avoided. As autumn may be the most beautiful season of a year, old age may be the best time of one's life, in which life wisdom is achieved, a real taste of life is felt, and the experiences give a sense of complete work. But there are also rainy and fruitless autumns and so old age can be futile, painful or even tragic (Kępiński, 1992:278).

All over the world, the phenomenon of aging of well-developed societies is observed. Growing is the number of seniors (aged over 65), who are a new social class, referred to as "leisure class" (Zych, 2005:17). Contemporarily, many elderly people have reached, or even exceeded the age of eighty, and they have a creative power, they work as volunteers, take responsibility for themselves and their health. There are also many seniors unprepared for old age, passive, who cannot fill free time with worthy and satisfactory activities. The experience of old age depends on the consciousness of individuals, their relationship to each other, the universe, transcendence and the state of health (Hy, 2004). However, the most important is an early preparation for "good" old age in the future.

A growing number of seniors in population of many countries makes it necessary to become interested in this generation. It is even more necessary since we are dealing with a paradox because, on the one hand, progress of medicine caused the lengthening of human life, on the other hand, people who are still in good psychophysical condition are deprived of work, which makes them bitter and frustrated. Many facts and phenomena situate old age in the consciousness of contemporary people in a very unfavorable light, as a period of "no prospects". Many elderly people have a sense of regret due to misused or lost opportunities, a feeling that there is not enough time and there is no sense to implement any changes. Symptoms of distress in the daily operation is a sense of bitterness, contempt for other people, anger, grouchiness, focus on negative

aspects of everyday life, persistent adherence to routine practices and resistance to any change (Brzezińska, S. Hejmanowski, 2005: 630).

Today in many countries, an extremely important task is to ensure elderly people a dignified and satisfactory old age because the situation of many elderly people is difficult and requires extensive research on many levels. This task is difficult because the trait and the challenge today is constant change, which puts the elderly with the need of continuous adaptation to rapid economic and social changes.

What problems are faced by contemporary seniors?

Due to the processes of globalization, a number of potential mental health problems have appeared, which are related to the need for adaptation, redefinition of oneself and one's role in real life. The modern world also causes orientation problems in people, because they are overwhelmed by the vastness of information and knowledge. Adaptation problems are associated with the fast pace of life. The multiplicity of life contexts causes difficulties in shaping individual and social identity, the identification problems. The coexistence of different systems of values causes axiological problems, while the ubiquitous rush - temporal problems, as it forces changes in the organisation of time (Jankowska, 2010:115). Urgent problems, such as loneliness and isolation of elderly people, require an instant solution. As noted by A. A. Zych (2005:18), "on the social standpoint we can see significant changes in the social position of old people, associated with changes in their roles, place and social status which, consequently, reduce the productivity of the final years of life of elderly people". L. Harris (1981) and E.B. Palmore (1984) consider as the most important problems of people of retirement age their deterioration of health, increased morbidity and the prospect of death, reduced income and poverty, the threat of mental illness and mental health, the need to stay in foster care (hospital, nursing home), and already mentioned isolation and loneliness. Increasingly, people are wondering how constructively and creatively they can deal with reality. What changes should they introduce in their real situation and in themselves (cf. "the continuing deconstruction of the existing order") (Bauman, 2000:23) in order to effectively realize their goals and preserve their identity? Solving these problems is often difficult for the elderly. The consequence of a life shaped by goals and resolutions is a sense of inner harmony, a dynamic order of consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996:392).

S. Popek emphasises that "man lives and grows thanks to a double mechanism: adaptation and diversity, adjustment and creativity" (Popek, 2010:22). People differ in terms of dominance of one of these mechanisms: either there is a predominance of the tendency to adapt and adjust, or a predominance of continuous alteration and growth dynamics. "Humans are most resistant to change, although they look forward to it" (Popek, 2010:22). However, K. Obuchowski believes that "the development of personality is the result of creative adaptation, i.e. adjustment of the internal organisation of a person to subjected reality understood in terms of personal, long tasks" (Obuchowski, 1993:30).

Creative approach to life and its implementation can be a significant emancipational factor that is in the hands of senior citizens, so frequently experiencing numerous limitations in social functioning. If an elderly person has an active attitude towards the surrounding world, they are more flexible, able to adapt to the objective requirements of the situation, they are spontaneous and ready to change themselves, and therefore, they present a creative attitude. The creative attitude is defined as the ability of a new approach, new perception of their own reality and the attitude towards it, with the use of previous experience, imagination and thinking. Such an understanding of the creative attitude is very close to the concept of creativity. Creativity is defined as a feature of a person, his or her potential for creative achievement now or in future; it is not necessarily an already accomplished creative output (Karwowski, 2009:9). Creativity as a trait is relatively common in population and it is the ability "to think unconventionally, to be open and willing to learn; the ability to ask important questions, and the ability to be amazed" (Obuchowski, 1993:9).

In the subjective dimension, secondary creativity can be discussed, which (in comparison with prominent creativity) is relatively common and is characterized by discovering, creating things and claims that had already existed, but which the author had not been familiar with, and therefore, they are new and original to him (egalitarian approach to creativity) (Popek, 2010:19).

A creative attitude to reality facilitates a sense of purposefulness of their lives, as opposed to the emptiness of life in inactive seniors. A person perceived from the perspective is largely free, being the creator of his life, he can also affect his own shape.

Creative activity of elderly people depends more on psychological factors, which belong to the "creative prototype" (positive personality characteristics associated with creativity) rather than chronological age. This creative prototype consists, among others, of one's own rules during action, impulsivity, non-conformity, emotionality, non-conformism (Westby, Dawson, 1995:1-10). As far as motivation for creative activity is concerned, elderly people may experience a weakening of certain motives (e.g. the need for achievement); enthusiasm, can also be reduced, but the resources of skills and abilities are still retained.

Old age is the most diverse phase of life; it is not subject to rules because it depends on the previous phases: childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Old age in the social dimension undergoes changes. It has become a major phenomenon. Subjective aging continues to depend on the individual's internal forces, its balance of life. It depends on who an aging person was, but it also depends on a historical and social environment.

Old age is an existential experience. Elderly person has to take care of his or her dignified old age; he or she must make choices. Clearly negative image of old age includes the following features: intolerance, conservatism, negative attitude to novelty, overestimation or even escape into the past, indifference to present time, egocentrism, suspicion and hypochondria and also a shift from extroversion to introversion (disengagement) and psychical rigidity.

Old age is an existential experience. In this period of life an elderly person has to take care of his or her dignified old age; he or she must make choices. The

averaged and clearly negative image of old age includes the following features: intolerance, conservatism, negative attitude to novelty, overestimation or even escape into the past, indifference to present time, egocentrism, suspicion and hypochondria and also a shift from extroversion to introversion (disengagement) and psychical rigidity. An elderly person, in whom the above features predominate, will find it difficult to accept what is "new" and to constructively connect it with "old", in order, as M. Pecyna writes, *"to bridge the gap between the past and the future"* (Pecyna, 1990:64). In numerous stereotypes related to the creative skills of people in advanced years creative activity is reduced to a trivial hobby, assuming that an elderly person has no ability of creative thinking, creation and he or she is satisfied by a hardly original activity. The optimistic picture of ageing takes into account the need for active life and continuous development. People who remain active, especially mentally active, live longer even than those who remain active physically (Lindauer, Orwoll, Kelley, 1997:133-152).

A. Maslow associates an individual's creative attitude with self-realisation and distinguishes it from creativity in the sense of a special talent. C. Rogers, in relation to creative attitude, uses the term "being open to experience". In turn, E. Fromm emphasises that we can speak of a creative attitude, even when an individual does not create a new product (Fromm, 1989:59). Man's creative attitude is the specific mode of perceiving the world. S. Popek understands creative attitude as "a property in terms of potential and accomplishment, and he defines it as a cognitive and characterological ability, shaped genetically and through personal experience, which reveals a tendency, attitude or willingness to transform the world of things, phenomena, and also one's own personality. It is, therefore, an active attitude toward the world and human life, that is expressed in the need of learning, living and a conscious transformation of reality and oneself (in terms of purpose, and not process)" (Popek, 1988:27).

It is difficult to perceive the environment (to be focused on the world), if the individual's attention is directed inward, when the majority of mental energy is focused on one's own concerns and desires (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996:355). If people, even those in advanced age, really feel free, they have a choice and take up the challenge of daily creative work. An open approach to the world enables an individual to remain objective and to perceive alternatives, to be part of the world around us.

Ageing, understood as an active process of achieving full maturity by the individual, means that despite the biological constraints the individual is able to change old beliefs and to open up to new experiences. It is difficult to perceive the environment (to be focused on the world), if the individual's attention is directed inward, when the majority of mental energy is focused on one's own concerns and desires (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996:355). If people, even those in advanced age, really feel free, they have a choice and take up the challenge of daily creative work. An open approach to the world enables an individual to remain objective and to perceive alternatives, to be part of the world around us.

According to M. Jankowska "creativity is a tool that fits perfectly both in the needs of modern people and the requirements of their environment" (2010:115). Aware of their potential people, who do not surrender to the problems of

loneliness, isolation and illness, can, despite the preoccupation with daily activities, find time for the development of the ego, the process of self-creation, transformation of themselves and the environment (Zaborowski, 2002:355), because almost every situation which we encounter in life offers us opportunities for growth, forces us to make continuous changes in different areas of their activities, use internal forces and resources for resolving difficult situations. M. Csikszentmihalyi believes that "even the awareness of impending death may help create the awareness of harmony, instead of despair." (1996:360).

Creative possibilities of the elderly and the importance of creativity in quality of their lives

Seniors make a creative effort in order to give a new meaning to their lives. The necessity to make sense out of life, to rediscover it and create values is specific to the human constitution (Mariański, 1999:87), and the desire to find meaning is regarded as a basic human need (metaneed). In order to meet this need, people choose the values that they consider important, trying to implement them in concrete terms and thus justify the meaning of their being. They set out a clear, practical and acceptable course of action and long-term goals. Meeting the need for a sense in life affects life satisfaction; the quality of relationships with people and it can trigger creative forces, inherent in a person. Elderly people not only perceive time differently, but they also look for a new meaning in their late phase of life, trying to update not always recognized potential through activity, which is beyond the borders of what has been achieved so far. In human nature, there is the desire to surpass himself, make transgressions, which are proven to the fullest in creative activity.

In many elderly people, there is the potential of activity that enables them to "go beyond" the limits of what they have achieved so far, to make changes in themselves, demonstrate their own creativity, and learn. There are various positive effects of learning in old age. Among them, there are mentioned: the preservation of good health, better coping with daily challenges, taking over more responsibility for their own lives, greater independence from other people, better use of their resources, the development of reflexivity (self-awareness, insight), following the development of science and technology, expanding and broadening the knowledge about the modern world, getting to know about their rights and appreciation of their role in society (Brzezińska, S. Hejmanowski, 2005: 653).

Seniors have the opportunity to develop different intellectual, artistic, religious and social interests, as well as recreation, because they withdrew from a number of fulfilled roles and they can spend time on a chosen activity. This means continuing to work on themselves, mobilizing their potential for active and creative activity at the time when people finally have time to fulfill their dreams and ideas from their youth, which, for various reasons, could not have been achieved before. Such openness to the challenges allows an elderly person to dynamically treat the changes as natural.

Seniors are equipped with valuable resources, among them their psychological assets: creativity, wisdom, and the openness to new experiences, joining the two resources. Despite this, there are elderly people, who, despite the great potential, take the attitude of “withdrawal” to the margins of social life and are not able to find meaning in the implementation of new tasks in life.

Creative activity contributes to successful aging, due to enhancing a sense of competence, purpose and growth. It helps in difficult moments of the aging process, by practicing problem-solving skills, development of their interests, knowledge, motivation and perceptions, personality development, strengthening of social bonds. All of the mentioned translates into practical creativity in everyday life. Creative activity enables to satisfy the need for the change of the surroundings, which is also desired by seniors (Hooper, Hooper, Colbert, McMahan, 1986:219-230), it reduces the level of self-centeredness, which disturbs relations between an elderly person and the surroundings. Such commitment in new exciting activities means that an older person is able to treat a new period in life in terms of tasks. In turn, the continuity of intended activities and contacts provides stability of the models of adaptation, and consequently, easier entry into late period of life. It is widely known that a man develops thanks to social ties, which are useful in the development and openness to the world.

It turns out that the greatest creative successes of many famous people are achieved in the twilight of their lives – despite increasing health problems – and due to them, seniors enjoy respect and trust of a society. When talking to elderly people, it is useful to give the examples that will motivate them to take up creative activities. The observations of artistic achievements of famous people confirm yet another conclusion, that these achievements do not depend on the age of the creator, because many great artists in old age created magnificent pieces of work, and their old age was the period of greatest development of their talents and the happiness connected with creative activity. Michelangelo painted “The Last Judgment” in the Sistine Chapel when he was between 56 and 66 years of age. Giorgio Vasari, a known biographer of artists of that period, writes: “When the picture of ‘The Last Judgment’ was exhibited, everybody could easily notice that Michelangelo had outdistanced not only the works of earlier painters who worked here, but also his own paintings on the vault of the chapel, which had duly gained him such fame”(…). Titian painted splendid figural compositions; he was a superb portraitist. At the age of 70 he created such outstanding works as “Nymph and Shepherd”, “The Crowning with Thorns” or the Venetian “Pietà”. Pablo Picasso after 80 was still an active painter, a graphic artist and a ceramist. El Greco in Toledo after 65 years of age painted “Laocoon”, the famous prospects of Toledo and the “Opening of the Fifth Seal”. In these late works he reached the peak of his individual pictorial style and in this regard he surpassed his time. He was often considered as a paragon for painters at the turn of the 19th century. Francisco Goya, at the age of approximately 70 years, painted the shocking “Execution of Rebels”. The late creative output of Marc Chagall after the age of 70 years was unusual. Henri Matisse designed the interiors of the chapel of Dominican nuns in Vence – stained-glass windows, murals, which are the affirmation of harmony, order and the joy of existence. The average age

of outstanding opera singers is also quite high. Many Polish painters created outstanding works in late age. Jacek Malczewski, after 60, painted such works as "Poland's Hector" and "Polonia", and when he was about 70 he finished the famous cycle "Thanatos". Leon Wyczółkowski, after 60, began to create graphic works (numerous lithographies) (Ruszczyc, 2008).

The accelerated aging of the population also applies to Poland (16% share of the elderly in the population of the country (Lubrczyńska, 2005). This is why it is important to understand the needs and also appreciate the role of seniors.

After retiring, seniors are often not satisfied with ordinary household duties and they are more likely to start exploring new areas of activity. The growing sense of loneliness, anxiety and more and more emerging questions that cannot be answered by them, and the need to contact with people of similar age, lead to seek ways of continuing education and creative activity in leisure time. In this area third age universities have an attractive offer. They have for years run courses of self-creation and self-education of the elderly (Lubrczyńska, 2005). All over the world, various forms of intercultural education are organised. It is understood as the totality of mutual influences and interactions of individuals, groups, institutions, organisations, associations which enable senior citizens to become fully aware and creative members of the family, as well as the local, regional, religious, national, continental, and cultural community, who are capable of the active self-realisation of their identity (Nikitorowicz, 2005), designed for seniors. Its goal is to improve the quality of life of people in this age group by comprehensive education and creative organisation of leisure time. Organisers of the programme looked for effective ways of social inclusion of the "silver age" through a process of creative activity and aesthetic education. It results from the opinion of the project participants that the confrontation of their artistic achievements with the achievements of people of different nationalities had a significant influence on the stimulation of creative imagination and individualised expression. A comparative analysis of the situation in various European countries has led to identify common elements and differences. The following issues were considered as the most essential:

- seniors of the twenty-first century have a high social potential; they are often well-educated, experienced, creative and have time to actively participate in various projects;
- in all countries of the project and many other European countries there is a growing public awareness of demographic changes and their effects, as well as increased activity of seniors;
- the needs of elderly people are more or less ignored in society, and by politicians. Their interests seem to be less significant than those articulated by other social groups and lobbying organisations. Seniors are perceived by the public only as the "recipient" (e.g. welfare or public health care system);
- seniors are one of the most dispersed groups;
- there are many barriers to seniors' public activity resulting from health, physical and educational problems, as well as an underdeveloped ability to use modern communication and information technologies. In this

respect, the current generation will be included in senior roles in 15-20 years with a better preparation in terms of core competencies in new technologies;

- elderly people often lack awareness of their own political strength and confidence, qualities needed to achieve acceptable performance;
- the representatives of the middle class dominate among active seniors.

Changes in the model of the Polish family from the extended family living together, in which all members have had continuous contact with each other to a family of young spouses living alone away from their parents, who have occasionally contact with them, resulted in the threat of isolation, sense of social "inadequacy" and solitude of seniors. In such circumstances, the attitude of elderly people to themselves and their situation is very important. Elderly people often engage in various activities to improve the quality of their lives, to avoid social isolation, to feel useful. An ageing individual has still many goals to accomplish and a few life roles to perform; he or she dreams about something, lives in some community, and has a baggage of personal experiences. Attitudes of people to their age, acquired and developed by them long before the proper old age have a very important significance for worthy life in old age. They include first of all the ability of active and creative passage through life because every age provides an opportunity for development (Belzer, Rugh, 1991:49). A convincing evidence is an active, almost enthusiastic participation of elderly people in the activities of the Universities of the Third Age, and the activities undertaken by elderly people in the field of artistic creativity (graphics, painting and ceramics workshops, and also singing in the chorus), are often on a high level.

Creativity in old age often involves the realisation of a dream and the pursuit of artistic expression. Using the creative potential in the second half of life is conducive to healthy aging. Preliminary findings from the research of the world-renowned psychiatrist and researcher Gene D. Cohen, presented in the book "The Creative Age: Awakening Human Potential in the Second Half of Life", 2001, Harper Collins Publisher, indicate that seniors who are actively engaged in creative activities have a much better mental and physical health, fewer problems with eyesight, they rarely feel lonely and depressed and they are more likely to take action in various fields.

Results of the study on seniors aged 60 to 93 involved in creative work have shown that creative activity contributes to favourable aging, fostering a sense of competence, objectives and growth. Artistic creativity has facilitated seniors' aging, also, by means of the encouragement to development of skills, problem solving, stimulation of motivation and broadening horizons, which has translated into creative management of everyday life. The content analysis of the interviews has confirmed the existence six characteristics of good ageing: a sense of purposefulness, interaction with others, personal growth, self-acceptance, autonomy and good health (Fisher, Specht, 1999:457-472).

Thus, a unique combination of age, experience and creativity can promote the developmental potential of every human being. Unfortunately, many people in our society have negative connotations (stereotypes) about the link between age, creativity (as a multidimensional mental disposition of an individual) and

creative activity. In addition to a large amount of time in retirement, another factors contributing to creative activities for people in old age are: less inhibitions and fears, wisdom based on abundant experiences, and more responsibility. The reactions of elderly people are more thoughtful, their judgments are balanced, decisions and actions are characterized by moderation and reserve. People in this age have a significant "vigilance" in the perception of events, they have the ability to distinguish what is important from the less important, they do not feel coerced, they are able to perceive the essence of things. Noteworthy characteristics of the elderly are: patience, hard work, striving for synthesis, as well as the ability to make generalisations. As indicated by the results of psychological studies on creative individuals, such as artists and writers – they are often able to generate more new ideas at the age of sixty and seventy, than at the age of twenty. In old age, youthful dreams and ideals frequently revive. The bloom of creativity in elderly people is sometimes called "late-blooming" (late bloomers) and it is compared with a flowering of plants that reaches its peak only at the end of the vegetative season.

Summary

Summing up the issue discussed in the paper, one can refer to the words of Antoni Kępiński: "the consciousness of self-fulfillment in one's life would be easier to cope with, if the fulfillment was the implementation of the capabilities, which are inherent in a person, if age was a true twilight of life. Unfortunately, few people can safely withstand the test of evangelical phrase: "by their fruits ye shall know them". Most people suffer from frustration, their life balance is negative. This sense of negative balance seems to be specific to our times, in which the problem of self-realisation, despite apparently and objectively better conditions, is especially difficult" (Kępiński, 1992:270). As the author of the quote continues, "nowadays, creative attitude is rare" (Kępiński, 1992:271), and only such an attitude can provide a sense of self-realisation. It is not only a manifestation in the arts, but rather a certain approach, characterized by openness, courage and independence. Who, if not seniors, has a full range of capabilities to achieve it? Only the good will is needed, as creative life, however demanded, is always a matter of choice. Obviously, necessary are the conditions and circumstances conducive to making such activities by the elderly.

Self-Realization of Seniors as a Way of Overcoming Social Exclusion

Introduction

The aging of population is one of the most pressing problems of the modern world. Because of this, demographers refer to the present days as the age of old people. According to statistics, the growth rate of the number of the elderly in the world is twice the population growth as a whole that is why a number of problems have appeared, which require speedy resolution. These are – the problems of social adaptation and social exclusion, the problems of effective use of the existing potential of older people and creating conditions for their education and productive development. The resolution of the above problems requires a more thorough study of this period of ontogenesis, forming a new attitude toward the elderly and their participation in social development at the national level, the creation of programs of psychological support of “positive aging” and the search for new forms of cooperation, involving the elderly in active social life. The results of the analysis of psychological and educational literature and the public life in Ukraine show that the need of the elderly for education and self-realization cannot find opportunities for satisfaction because the current state policy and the society are poorly targeted at seniors and avoid the topic of social exclusion of these people. However, their motivation for continuous learning and development, their pursuit of activities, and the need for social, communicative and cultural ties make a person at this age seek new opportunities for self-realization and avoiding of social exclusion.

The entire industrial world is experiencing demographic changes. Demographers very often call our time: the age that has become old. If we compare the average lifespan at the beginning of the twentieth century and today, the difference between them is about 30 years: in 1900 people lived to 47-55 years of age and nowadays – to around 85.

Roland Pressa, a French gerontologist and demographer, explained this phenomenon as such, where the proportion of people who have grown old is increasing, while the number of young people is decreasing. A Polish researcher, Edward Rosset, said that the most dangerous consequence of this phenomenon

is the aging of the group of population which has an active role in the production process and which provides the livelihood in the modern economy.

At the same time, the aging is a problem worrying not only economists and gerontologists, but also psychologists, because the older generation finds it very difficult to cope with the rapid scientific and technological progress. In particular, it affects the representatives of professions whose work is connected with intellectual activity, whose knowledge needs to be updated because it does not meet the standards of our time. It is not easy for them to learn to work with computers and to keep up with technologization, informatization and computerization of the production process itself.

Today it is difficult to find a job for a person who has reached 35, because the professional experience is valued less than the modern education. In addition, aging is accompanied by a variety of physical and psychological illnesses, which impose restrictions on the ability of a person of this age to work productively and satisfy one's everyday needs.

Sometimes old people become a burden for those who care about them, for the state, which should provide funds for their care and treatment, but in fact they are often thrown out by society itself and just stay out of active social life. In this regard, modern scientists are faced with a number of problems associated with aging and the need for their prompt decision. Among them - problems of social adaptation of older people and social exclusion, problems of effective use of the existing potential of older people, their education and productive self-realization.

Old age is often referred to as the "evening of life" or "twilight period". However, despite these pessimistic allegories, at the same time, this age period still encourages those who feel physically healthy, have an enough amount of energy and life experiences, to be active and use all of their abilities in practice, to satisfy their own need for self-development and self-realization.

That is why this period of life is also often called "juvenility in old age". Therefore, the main challenge that faces psychologists, gerontopsychologists, social psychologists, and social workers is to help seniors adapt to age-related physical, physiological and social changes. First of all, to help them form an adequate perception of their own age and aging, develop the ability intelligently allocate the time and use productively the years which have remained to form the ability to resist the affective impoverishment, maintain emotional flexibility, internal cohesion and meaningful perception of life, develop the ability to resist social stereotypes about older people, in particular with regard to their physical, occupational and social activities, their place in the society, possibilities for their development and self-realization. The study of the phenomenon of «self-realization» refers to the first half of the XX century.

In 1935, the terms "self-realization" and "self-actualization" were introduced into the scientific usage by a neuropsychophysicologist K. Goldstein. In his work entitled «The Organism», K. Goldstein described self-realization as a universal principle of life.

In the most general sense, the notion of «self-realization» indicates the implementation of opportunities for development of «Self». Quite often this term

is used as a synonym for the words «self-development», «self-actualization», «self-fulfillment». All these words are very close in their meaning. They were all described by humanists as phenomena which indicate: the realization of a personality's natural potential (K. Horney), human desire for a total identification and development of one's opportunities and abilities (K. Rogers), healthy development of human capabilities as an opportunity to become what one can be, to live fully and meaningfully (A. Maslow), achievement by a personality of integrity and unity through individuation (C.G. Jung), a personality's innate desire to self-realization (Sh. Buhler).

In general, the desire for the realization of one's own "Self", was explained by practically almost all authors as the disclosure of latent potentialities of the individual. At the same time, not one of the humanists tried to explain definitively such important basic methodological notions in the self-realization theory as the nature of self-realization, motive forces and conditions of self-realization, determinants and meaning of self-realization, which even today remain debatable, since modern scientists could not come to an agreement on what self-realization is: a process, a result, an innate tendency to self-realization, an ultimate goal, or something else (Коростылев, 2005:10).

During the Soviet times, Ukrainian and Russian psychologists were considering the problem of self-realization in the context of psychology of self-determination, in particular, it was not interpreted as an independent branch of psychological science, but as part of the psychology of "self-determination", the contents of which was most fully revealed through the concept of "personality", which had been studied in the area of such notions as "self-cognition", "self-expression", "self-regulation" (K. A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya, B.G. Anan'ev, L. Bozhovich, M. R. Ginsburg, G.S. Kostiuk, M. J. Boryshevskiy, S. D. Maksymenko etc.) (Горностаї, Т. М. Титаренкотайн, 2001:111).

In the 1990s, a tendency to view self-realization as a separate subject of study appeared. In the current psychology, it is interpreted as the form and the result of an individual's activity (D. A. Leontiev), realization of opportunities of "Self" by means of persons' own efforts and in collaboration with others (L. O. Korostyleva), as a manifestation of human self, as a conscious, purposeful process of opening and objectifying of essential powers of man (V. E. Galazhynsky), as the embodiment of man's potential in a variety spheres of practical activities: work, game, cognition, communication, etc. (Титаренко Т. М) (Горностаї, Т. М. Титаренкотайн, 2001:111).

The question of self-realization in ontogeny has a special place. The sequence of stages forms a temporal structure of existence of a personality. Each stage represents a new level of development. It is complicated by the fact, that many dimensions of a life's journey are the interweaving of different lines of development, each of them having its own history. The movement goes through life with the development of man as an individual, as a person and as a subject of activity, that ultimately forms a man as a unique integrity - individuality. These, combined, but at the same time different directions of a personality's movement in one's development, determine changes in a person's way of life and its structures, determine the formation and self-determination of a personality during

each age period, influencing the behavior and personal choices throughout their life's journey with baggage with which they enter into retirement (Максименко, 2006).

Self-realization of seniors was examined by V. D. Alperovych, L. Antsiferova, Z. A. Butueva, A. L. Buryakovskyy, S. L. Frank, A. Krasnova, H. A. Rybakova, N. F. Shakhmatov, L. V. Prokhorova, T. Tytarenko, and others., who decided to study it in the context of concepts of the way of life and the meaning of life (Краснова, 1997:3-19).

Almost of all of the authors mentioned emphasized that the list of human needs in old age is in most cases the same as in other age periods, but the structure and hierarchy of needs have changed, particularly such needs as *creativity, self-realization, activation of life of old people, sense of community* are put forward to the center of the motivational sphere (Анциферова Л, 2006:271-272)*.

The period of old age is the final stage of human life, it is important that during this period everyone can feel that their life is still meaningful, which helps everybody to live actively and productively.

It is well known that the idea of psychological age is relative, that the criteria of periodization of age and life expectancy depend on the *biological* characteristics of the organism and *social* environmental factors.

Social factors include: the character of work, level of provision of material goods and medical care, housing, an individual's attitude towards the society, objectivity and realism in assessing individual capacity, adequacy of an individual's choice of social roles and one's place in the society.

The *biological* factors include: *endogenous* (a set of internal resources of the human body: gender, heredity (genetic code), favorable or unfavorable inclinations) and *exogenous* factors (the conditions in the environment: natural and climatic conditions in the environment, the environmental situation, the impact of solar radiation and so on).

There is no doubt that biological life expectancy is determined by its genetic constitution, but it is usually not fully realized due to deleterious effects of social conditions. At the same time, biological life serves as a guide for the real sequel average life expectancy. The difference between these two values is the reserve that can be realized by improving the conditions and life styles.

However, nowadays psychologists, gerontologists, physicians still cannot determine when the period of aging begins. Most of them (B. Przhyhoda, E.B. Harlok, J. Birren, D. B. Bromley etc.) consider that it is 60-65 years of age, but others believe, that no calendar dates are unacceptable (I. B. Davydovskiy), because aging is an enormously individual process. The most important psychological factor of aging is the acceptance of one's own old age (Шахматов, 1987:110).

Another important criterion which indicates the entry of a person in the period of late maturity (age) is the social criterion, which is connected with the retirement of an official person.

However, different countries have different retirement ages for different occupational groups, for men and for women (55-65 years), so this criterion cannot be taken as a basis for setting the age limit at which retirement occurs. Old age

has no distinctly determined boundaries – either at its early stage or during the final one. It has a distinctly individual character.

Traditionally, the period after 60 was studied by herontology, because it was always considered as the time of aging, fading and retirement. At the same time, it should be mentioned that the period of late adulthood lasts rather long – from 55 to 75 years, probably twenty years. Usually, it is divided into several stages. A man of 55 is significantly different from a person at 75 years, not only in terms of their state of health, but also the motivation, sense of life and self-realization. This is why researchers usually divide late adulthood into two stages: the first stage – “early old age” or “the third age”, which lasts from retirement to 70-75 years of age, and the second stage – “old age”, which comes only after 70. This is why those who have not reached 70 but have remained in good health and are able to lead an active and independent life, to maintain oneself without assistance, should be considered as the potential productive part of retired seniors.

At the same time, it should be noted that this period of ontogeny has never been considered as a productive period in a person’s development. Most people of 55 are retired and consider their professional career finished. It has happened for many reasons. One of them is the stereotypical attitude to this period of age and to a person, who has reached 55.

Psychologists agree that the attitude to people in late adulthood depends more on social and psychological factors, including widespread social stereotypes, than on biological aging. The most common social stereotypes about seniors are: conservative, eccentric, apathetic, weird, though traditionally old age has always been associated with wisdom and experience. Most authors (V. D. Alperovych, B.G. Annan, D. Y. Raigorodskiy, M. V. Ermolaeva, G. S. Suhobska and others) also note that the popular stereotypes of passivity and conservatism of seniors empirically have not been confirmed, that retirement should not lead to the cessation of professional activity and exclude seniors from the society. If the life was meaningful and creative, progressive development of personality during old age would not stop. Systematic long-term scientific researches show that mental changes in seniors are not of personal nature. Losing physical strength, an older person retains the ability to grow as a personality.

Victor Frankl has rightly pointed out that a man who has spent a fruitful life would not become a decrepit old man, but rather his mental and emotional qualities that have been developed throughout his life are saved, despite the fact that his physical forces have become weak (Франкл, 1990:157).

Eventually, a modern society that is undergoing a severe economic crisis, on the one hand, understanding the value of such an experience of seniors, is trying to use the practical knowledge and worldly wisdom of elderly people, but on the other - excludes them from the system of social activities. But the society that considers itself civilized has no right to ignore personal problems of seniors who have been excluded from it.

The term “social exclusion” emerged in the late twentieth century during the study of poverty and such social phenomena as marginalization, deprivation and others. The concept of “social exclusion” was introduced by a French governor Rene Lenoir (Lenoir, 1989).

As a result, the static concept of "poverty" was replaced by a new dynamic category - "social exclusion". This concept is used to describe the limitation or deprivation of rights in civil law, such as restricting access to institutions of social integration, especially in the labor market, to the social services, access to education and the right to work. An important contribution to the understanding of this concept and the construction of a theory of social exclusion was made by the following scientists: G. Rodgers, B. Jordan, A. de Haan, S. Maxwell, A. Power, Ch. Gore, W. Wilson, R. Atkinson, J. Hobearft, M. Wolf, S. Pauham, P. Abrahamson and others.

Today the problems of social exclusion is dealt with by F. Borodkin, T. Baraulyna, M. Wolf, D. Hom'en, J. Houf, K. Duffy, L. Zvaak, J. Friedman, V. R. Schmidt and others.

As for seniors, this term is used when talking about the limitations connected with aging or with forced retirement, when a person loses their job, the level of well-being or the social status. As a result of social exclusion, seniors are faced with destruction of social ties, curtailment of social space, reduced social capital, the problem of trust in the relationship with the society, loss of activity, and the problem of self-realization.

Today, there are several theories of social exclusion that interpret the state, feelings, and inner world of an excluded individual.

One of the most developed theories explaining the situation of excluded older people is the « *theory of separation* », which was first described by J. Rosen and B. Nyuharten and was later supplemented by E. Cumming and W. Henry. The essence of the theory is that in old age a person changes the motivation, in particular, each person at this age is focused on his or her inner world, and his or her interest in a communicative activity is decreased. Formally, the loss of social ties begins with retirement and objectively is manifested in the fact that a person loses previous social roles, their income is reducing and they are going through a loss of family or separation from family. Subjectively, a person feels redundant and focuses on their inner world. Distancing from the society, according to the authors, is the most adaptive and successful mode of existence in old age. This theory reflects the view of aging as a period of involution, whereby a person becomes unclaimed in the society. This theory is called the "theory of liberation" (alienation) because the aging allegedly makes an elderly person "free" - retired from all obligations to society. Both the individual can initiate this process and others involved in a particular situation. The most unfortunate element of it is that the authors of this approach consider an elderly person as redundant in the society and accept it as a norm.

Quite opposite to the theory presented above is the "*theory of activeness*", which emphasizes the person's natural to preserve relationships with the society, and the real reason for severing seniors from the society is the society's refusal to collaborate with them.

But in fact, as most of researchers of the psychology of seniors consider, the peculiarity of the inner world of an old man is the parallel existence of two orientations: the first – the desire for union, need to feel socially popular,

meaningful, rewarding and useful, the second – the desire for autonomy, peace, and self-sufficiency.

However, people who have retired and who do not consider themselves old feel the need to work just like those who have not entered the retirement age. Work gives meaning to an elderly person's life, promotes positive self-perception. Even in the retirement age, they feel the need to continue activity. This gives them a sense of life satisfaction. The exclusion of an individual from the mainstream of an active social life based on age is associated usually with the limitations of his social space and social activities.

Retirement means a loss of communication with the reference group to which a man has devoted his entire life, the loss of the social role which was important for that person, which increases the loss of social and psychological incentives, destruction of professional and interpersonal relationships. Disappointment and depression, uncertainty and a restrained attitude of the surrounding people, block actualization of potential experiences, prevents the accumulation of new achievements.

One of the ways to overcome social exclusion of seniors is self-realization. In the conditions of the development of modern society, including the blurring of boundaries between generations, the rapid aging of knowledge and transformation of major social institutions, self-realization is converted into the main social and personal need, which meets the integrity of the individual and the requirements of society.

Practice shows that currently problems of a person's self-realization in retirement are not addressed either by herontopsychology, occupational psychology, or psychology of organizations. Human resources managers are more concerned with the question of how to honestly and tactfully to send elderly persons to their retirement. But even if organizations, which are rare exceptions, provide people at the retirement age with work, they usually offer them positions which have nothing to do with the seniors' main occupation. As usual, the employers offer either part-time or seasonal work. This suggests that the provision of an older person with work is rather seen as an exception, but not as a natural phenomenon.

But despite the difficulties of modern life, people cannot get rid of their social nature, which manifests itself in the need to realize one's own "Self" in the activities of the society and to be evaluated by this society. The conflict between personal desire for activity and social aspects of exclusion updates the topics of self-realization in old age and encourages finding the relevant system solutions for restoration of social activity of older people, social capital and connections, which are the basic condition for self-realization.

The peculiarity of social exclusion of seniors is that it is accompanied by ageism - the deprivation by age criterion, which can affect anyone reaching the old age.

The great experience and ability to examine life and events in it in different coordinate systems enable elderly people to find a new occupation, try to realize themselves in a new job, take part in new social or any other kind of activity, and build a productive life after retirement.

High cognitive formations and positive acquisition that are inherent to the person in late adulthood, such as dialectical thinking (K. Riegel), wisdom (E. Erickson, P. Baltes) indicate a high level of integration and integrity of individuals and their ability to perform complex types of work with different levels of intellectual tasks, give useful advice on vital issues. But the society treats the elderly as objects of influence, which require care and maintenance. It does not want to see seniors as socially active business partners that seek to meet their life's important needs through collaboration with various social institutions and organizations, to develop their skills and take responsibility for their actions and decisions.

This tradition of attitudes towards senior people is supported by the society which does not care about those who are trapped in poverty, survive on low income, and limit themselves in the satisfaction of the elementary human needs. This is why retirees often seek additional sources of income, settle for a job which does not fit their profession. These facts indicate that the social activity of seniors is not implemented with the support of the society, but it is rather their attempt at survival.

Conclusions

Social and psychological development of man is not limited during any age period. Development is a continuous process. A person realizes themselves during their entire life. Self-realization never stops. It is a way of a person's existence.

The progressive development of personality in old age greatly depends on meaningful, creative life at earlier stages, during which everyone has to form the ability to integrate the experience, one's past, present and future life, including the skills of successful coping with life's challenges and conflicts.

The development of personality in late adulthood has its specificity, which is connected with the influence of age and retirement.

Exclusion is the elimination of a human being from the society. As a bilateral process, it should be considered in two aspects: personal and social. The returning of elderly people to the mainstream depends on social and personal factors. Social exclusion of seniors is accompanied by ageism.

The way of overcoming the exclusion in late adult age is self-realization, which can be fulfilled in professional or social activities, in the family, in raising the educational level at the University of the Third Age, in maintaining a healthy lifestyle, in the development of new forms of leisure and creative activity, etc.

Socio-existential Activation of Seniors by Way of Autobiographic Workshop. Presentation of Original Program Assumptions and Practical Solutions

Introduction

The leading theme of the paper is the biographic workshop, its meaning, and ways in which it benefits adults and elderly people (Lasocińska, wawrzyniak, 2013). The purpose of execution of the biographic workshop is to encourage its participants to bring back memories, analyze their own experience and evidence of the past, as well as to reinforce their development, both at present and in the future. One of the conditions of taking full advantage of one's own experience is to **process mentally** the afterthought concerning past experience. The workshop constitutes part of biographic didactics, it leads the participants to self-discovery, (re)interpretation of events, self-definition and setting further goals and vital tasks. The workshop fulfills educational, therapeutic and recreational functions. Owing to the above-mentioned elements, the adult and elderly participants are activated so that they are ready to face new challenge, start contacting other people, overcome their own limitations. Biographic didactics may be defined as activating and creative due to the fact that autobiographic reflection allows adaptation to change, and also fosters a person's flexibility, so important at each stage of life.

Biographic activity contains creative elements – it assumes finding new points of view, as the reconstruction of one's own life story does not have to be carried out according to a specific scheme, it is a rather personal project. Elements of creation appear in autobiographic thinking in various aspects expressed by the following:

- various interpretations of life events allowing for going beyond schematic and stereotypical approach to events;
- use of elements of fiction and “biographical imagination” in the process of constructing one's own life story;

- shaping narrative identity (which changes in time) and a picture of one's own "self";
- reflexive projecting of one's own future, determining new goals and tasks.

Thus, the creation concerns the entire life and its various domains. According to Kazimierz Dąbrowski (1979), our life has to be created constantly if it is to be recognized as authentic.

Biographic activity may be a form of self-aggrandizement; a human being defines himself/herself by means of interpreting life events, they make their past events meaningful, construct and reconstruct plans or projects concerning the expected future. Creativity and the works of art prepare for changes, at the same time allow the introduction of changes, both intentionally and consciously. They help to turn away from the old patterns, open to new experience and overcome own restrictions and barriers.

Autobiographic activities are connected with organizing past events and memories; summing-up and arriving at some conclusions (balance) takes place. It is not a process directed merely at recording objective facts of life, rather than that; it leads to revealing personal interpretations. Quite often, presentation of one's own life story is linked with a change of ideas concerning the life, also, with discovering new possible explanations of the same situations and events. Reminiscence is not a process of re-enactment, it is rather choosing what is important, defining a certain vision of one's own past. The past within the process of reminiscence becomes yet more subjective, individual – even if it concerns objective or global events. That is so because every individual has their own personal insight into facts, way of their internalization and retention, as well as way of drawing conclusions and facing consequences.

Moreover, the selection of memories is important – a person makes a choice individually (to a various degree consciously) of what is to be forgotten and what is to be remembered. Individual participants may perceive the same event differently: they remember different details, they classify a given memory differently, often, they attribute different meanings to a given event, they also differ as we focus on their emotions. Let us refer to Douwe Draaisma's opinion: *"memory is like a dog that lies down where it pleases"* (2006), which not only highlights the subjective mode of selecting memories, but also the unpredictability of the moment when a memory and associations may appear and when we recall them from our own past.

Autobiographic activities may be either of a **retrospective** or **prospective nature**. The first case mainly concerns organizing the past, assumes referring to memories and a balance of past events. Besides that, autobiographic activity additionally takes into consideration both the present and the anticipated future. In this approach, it is connected with outlining our future, leading our own life, planning new tasks and determining further direction of development, it is of **prospective nature**. Therefore, the project of our own life is linked with the reflexive project of identity, while envisioning our own future gives the feeling of personal control and influence on things that happen to us (Giddens, 2001:275). It may also be treated as a proof of creative approach to our own

existence, sensing the need of creativeness, and ruling over our own life. An analysis of own biography as well as events comprised in it, together with their consequences, is additionally of educational character, it serves as confirmation of the reflexive attitude towards one's own life and awareness of creating one's own path of development.

The meaning of taking up biographical activity

Both the contemporary culture and custom glorify youth and active lifestyle, resourceful and active people are appreciated, while the withdrawn and old-fashioned are pushed away to the periphery of life. A growing number of people at the post-productive age, and the overwhelming pop culture give rise to ageism, especially in the employment market and in social life. The inclination to marginalize seniors has become so prevailing nowadays that the seniors themselves voluntarily tend to submit to being marginalized, to make matters worse, they apply acts of (self)marginalization.

Moreover, neither the time of adulthood, nor old age constitute a theme attractive enough to provoke a social debate, least of all, to elicit marketing or political involvement on the part of the media industry. The animosity towards the period of human life called the "late maturity" is strengthened by the phenomenon of "social death", when a human being - fully fit and in good health - is no longer offered any job: satisfying or socially valued; the phenomenon in sociology literature is referred to as performing "a role with no role" to perform (Burgess, 1960:20-21). That is when a paradoxical phenomenon appears: a sick and unfit person may accept more easily the condition of being old and/or becoming a senior citizen, and, as a result being excluded socially, as opposed to a person who is healthy, strong and ready to act.

The society willingly envisions older people as retirement home or sanatorium residents; seniors are also granted family posts - of grandparents looking after their grandchildren. Yet, nowadays, such occupations are not always possible to accomplish, additionally, they do not guarantee expected satisfaction. Very often, the retirees of today have greater expectations of life in comparison with their forefathers. Activity, in which one may seek successful and positive ageing, has become available at any (late) age, and is adjusted so as to meet the senior's efficiency and needs (Wawrzyniak, 2013).

Forms and frequency of activity that may satisfy a person at the advanced maturity period, such activities that a person may wish to take up (renew, continue, or take up something new) are largely connected with the person's entire life. Often, they result from experience and events encountered on the life path. Life experiences are the basic treasure of any existence, when captured in a form of a biography and analyzed consciously, they allow for searching out and refining particular events.

Various features characterize contemporary biographies, among them there are: growing diversification of the input, lack of specification, additionally, an opportunity of self-liberation, learning and self-development appears. This

means that a person has a chance to “try to find himself/herself”, independently determine one’s goals, tasks and projects, at the same time being able to take a chance on new tasks, challenges and development. Obvious inevitability and unavoidability of change, as one proceeds in life, result in exposing the man to a quest of new ways of fulfillment and achieving life satisfaction. The unpredictable events that appear require –on the part of the person involved - openness while facing the processes of inner experience and acceptance of the new life circumstances. The man becomes the creator of changes in life, the ones that are purposeful and intended (Kubacka-Jasiecka (2002). As life goes on, life experiences begin to play a more and more important role, they allow for certain recapitulations and reflection. Moreover, events and experience being interpreted differently at various phases of life gain new significances and values (Keupp: 1998).

Reflexive attitude towards autobiography enables the process of self-improvement and learning at each phase of life. Grown-ups are given a chance to make decisions concerning personal development and own future independently, and, additionally, the reflexive attitude reinforces the skills needed to face life’s hardships.

The value of analysis of one’s own biography lies in the use of memories as a stimulus to self-cognition, without it, self-upbringing or self-consciousness would be impossible to achieve. An analysis of biography, especially the part concerning childhood, more and more frequently seems to be of central importance when diagnosing emotional, depression-related or identity problems of adults. Also, at the level of daily functioning, quite important is the view that the relation to past events constitutes the driving force of existence (Demetrio, 1999:43).

Recording own memories, writing diaries or own biography has a therapeutic function, not only do they focus on recollection of memories, but also, or rather foremost, they focus on the organizing and selection of the material, which, in turn, allows the creation of pictures, landscapes and new stories, and – finally- enable the person to draw conclusions, receive knowledge and learn lessons. The “pictures” most often concern the emotional, subjective sphere of life, while the “landscapes” are related to the social, objective sphere in which we refer to historical time of our own biography. The author faces a chance to look back from the present perspective into the general past, and at his or her own self in particular. Such looking back facilitates building one’s own identity, and also, getting to understand other people. That kind of perspective may be helpful in freeing from (too much) emotion and building distance from difficult or painful matters, as a result, leaving within us positive pictures of the past (Wypiorczyk-Przygoda, Wawrzyniak, 2011:225-226).

The analysis of one’s own biography should also begin a process of becoming conscious which can be related to as retaining experience, then drawing a conclusion, and, as a consequence, apprehending reflection or auto-reflection. Otherwise, the experience may be considered unused, the person remains empty as

if he/she has not experienced anything (Brun, 1993:69)¹⁷³. Each of the life experiences seems an important element in the process of a person's development, the person is enriched educationally by the way of reflection and drawing conclusions. The act of presentation and writing down a biography is accompanied by reevaluation; from the educational point of view one may observe reinterpretation and auto-reflection that lead to the transformation of attitudes, reevaluation of one's own behavior, creation of a new/different lifetime project; it constitutes the basis of collecting pieces of self-knowledge, as well as that concerning the others. The awareness of one's own identity is largely built on the basis of retained events, also of the experiences that occurred along the path of one's life development. That is the way we create the picture of ourselves which, later on, we carry along the consecutive phases of our development.

Development of a grown-up person is related to **governing the life**, it is submitted to values, aims and aspirations, thus making the significance of one's life deeper. Alternatively, creative development of a person may be linked with day-to-day activities, also based on the change of the life model, change of the main direction of activity and modification of plans and intentions. The period of retirement requires such change, if it is to be the time of fulfillment and self-realization, as opposed to life stagnation or giving up activities. Autonomy, or else, a relative state of holding autonomy constitutes an important developmental factor in a person of mature age, allowing for greater freedom and possibilities of making personal decisions. The development deals with the **progressive reshaping** of a given feature, it may concern certain behavior, and also be based on the change of life ambitions, or goals to set. If we take into consideration a person mainly involved professionally in the previous life period, at a certain stage the person begins to widen the range of activities and focus on family matters or own interests. Transformation reinforcing the person's development and change may be based on taking up new activities, building new bonds with people or establishing contacts with institutions (Pietrasinski, 1990:44-54).

Mature age is linked with a radical change of conditions of development; the **day-to-day practice with its requirements** becomes the factor aiding advancement. Independent observation and reflection become the fundament of the full use of the above mentioned practice as a source of progress. The progress is the side effect of everyday activity, lifestyle, kind of work one performs, or favorite leisure activity.

Thus, the adult growth requires as follows:

- learning through observation
- searching for feedback
- reflection on experiences (Pietrasinski, 1990:148).

An important feature reinforcing personal growth is the **insight** into one's own experience, and the skill of modifying one's own activity. Such choices as moving places or establishing new social contacts influence the person and her/his self-definition. New living environment changes the person and influences

¹⁷³ P. Brun (1993), *Les historie de vie dans mouvement ATD Qurant Monde proces de Connaissance*, In: Czerniawska O. (2000), *Drogi i bezdroża andragogiki i gerontologii*, Wydawnictwo WSHE in Łódź, Łódź, p. 69.

their further movements. Development is linked with either taking up new tasks, or operating in new circumstances, both of which require new approach to accomplishing routine activities (Pietrasiński, 1990:78).

Self-creation (auto-creation) in the biographic activity

Adults' development is revealed at auto-creative activities and in the need of re-approach to self-definition. *Auto-creations* are linked with self-development, in this context a person is not creative in a sense of professional creation, as an artist; the person is perceived as an individual human "me", thus, the **person's biography, the entire human life** is becoming the resource base. The vision of oneself and that of one's life frequently become transformed and modified as a result of various life experiences, and, gradually gained maturity (Schulz, 1990:42).

The daily life of common people represents a vast working field for self-creation, the possibilities of undertaking advancement tasks depend neither on the age, nor the stage of life. There is a distinction between two kinds of self-creation: the intentional (deliberate and purposeful), and non-intentional (unplanned).

Intentional auto-creation is a directed activity with the aim of a planned change of oneself and one's own actions, like taking up new classes, sports activity, or deciding to return to and develop the talents or interests which have so far been neglected. Thus, in the process of auto-creation a person consciously and purposefully shapes their own way of life and advancement. *Non-intentional auto-creation* is a result of a person's choices that are not directed towards advancement, still resulting in self-creativity. It is the effect of one's own decisions which are not associated with the process of forming one's own person, nevertheless, the forming takes place (Pietrasiński, 1990:152). It may be so that a person passively gives in to circumstances, then decides to withdraw and disregard the challenge. A newly retired person that gives up being active, or mainly expects support on the part of the family may serve as an example illustrating the case. That kind of choice forms the feeling of being dependent and insecure, influences the way the person sees himself/herself, and the existential situation. The further effect of such an approach may result in general disappointment with life, a life that had been lived by the very person, yet, neither the person's purpose nor intention were involved. Thus, it is crucial that a person is inspired to change, to undertake activity intentionally, and to make her/his way towards the selected aim.

The process of (intentional) auto-creation is based on:

- the person **formulating aims**; monitoring their execution;
- **determination of rules** concerning the person's own behavior (the rules may be modified at various stages of life);
- **designing and introducing changes** concerning the person's own activities (in accordance with their needs);
- **self-reflection** and recapitulation of experiences (Pietrasiński, 2008:163).

Each action performed by a person may be analyzed either from the current, or the **biographic perspective**. The latter case is linked with using and revealing auto-creative competence; one of the manifestations of the competence is focusing on the **holistic perspective of life events**, in other words: focusing on the biographic perspective which evolves under the influence of the auto-reflection undertaken (Pietrasiński, 2008:165). Thus, the process of auto-creation requires going beyond the current needs, while situational pressure, distance, change of the perspective from which the results of own deeds and their consequences are analyzed.

Auto-creation assumes ability to demonstrate **self-distance** and **self-reflection** concerning one's own behavior. Self-distance is a skill of becoming an object of dispassionate, impersonal self-analysis. It is based on holding self-distance, also on holding the distance towards the environment and the enforced views or opinions. Of a crucial importance is the **distance to the drift of events** gained when a person, being at a certain stage of life, accomplishes the balance of his/her life. The balance is of pro-developmental value, yet, it should be reviewed and deepened now and again. The main questions related to the pro-developmental balance concern the past ("where have I come from?"), others concern the present ("where am I going?, what am I like at the present phase of life?"). The **pro-developmental balance** allows for viewing the events and the person herself/himself from a perspective that enables creating a distance from subjective feelings and emotions, additionally, it is of the auto-creative value ((Pietrasiński, 2008:107-162). The balance sheet shows its author what their life history has "done" to her/him, yet, there is a more important question to ask: is the author is going to make the best of his/her "life's work"? It is the knowledge that enhances one's influence on their life history, still, it is the consciousness that facilitates the process of transformation and sensitizes the author to any mistakes made. Self-distance encourages reflection concerning the developmental aspects of our life activity (Pietrasiński, 2008:155).

The second important factor aiding self-creation is **self-reflection**. It constitutes a particular case of reflection, a process with its highest manifestation at the point of considering matters in the light of their conditioning and consequences. The subject matter of self-reflection is not the external world but the author (the subject) personally with his/her **inner experience**. Self-reflection may be either *incidental*, or *systematic*. Both the reflection, and the self-reflection aid the quality of life at the adult phase (Pietrasiński, 2008:111-112). **Self-reflection** allows for directing the reflection towards one's own self, still, it also assumes determining one's own fate. Such circumstances enable a person to influence creatively the natural, social and psychological environment (Lash, 2009:152). Reflection helps to connect events that are distant in time, and apparently dissimilar, and show the day-to-day routine from the perspective of existential questions, it allows for discovering strategy and values hidden behind acts. Reflection fulfills a helpful function in the process of development of adults.

Situations in which adult people achieve certain **revaluation** constitute a vital element of their development. The revaluation results from the balance of foregoing life, the analysis of its quality, and the sense of fulfilment (Oleś, 2003).

Important priorities also undergo transformation, identifying oneself with a professional position may be shifted into other spheres of life, thus the person may have a fuller experience of harmony of being active in various fields. In the case of older people, becoming a retiree requires a change of values and direction in their everyday activities. Performing a professional function no longer serves as the source of self-definition; roles performed so far become changed, and so do the ways of building social relations. Revaluations are substantial in the process of shaping oneself at the new stage of life. Self-creative activity is a stimulation to endow pro-developmental activities; the goal may be achieved by the way of initiating changes consciously, as well as widening the perspective of perceiving life events, including general life situation, possibilities and opportunities linked with the situation. At the same time, personal development endowed with self-creative activities and self-reflection should be heading towards maturity and should encourage worldly wisdom.

Basic assumptions of the original project of biographic workshop

In response to requirements linked with activation and advancement of adults and the elderly, a project has been established; its aims are as follows:

- enhancement of the skill of adaptation to a situation of transformation;
- stimulation to creative approach to life situations, overcoming routine, habits and patterns functioning while interpreting events; looking for other, new points of view;
- reinforcement of self-reflection and expression of one's own personality, self-expression through the life history;
- optimization of life quality through prevention of difficulty and overcoming obstacles or barriers that may appear;
- preparation for writing memoirs and building knowledge on the basis of life experience.

The biographical workshop is offered to adults and the elderly. It aims at introducing educational aspects of own biography to the participants of the workshop by way of reconstructing a personal life story, finding challenge that is important to a particular person. The classes allow for creative look at one's biography, deeper insight into it, and help find the most important meanings of life events. The tasks offered to the workshop participants are additionally aimed at a quest for further self-betterment in the fields of interests, aspirations and dreams.

The main idea and message of the workshop is to inspire the participants to change the approach to their own life experience in order to acquire a fuller sense of whatever everyday life may bring, and also to enable the participants to re-examine their self-definition and to become aware of important values and aims at the current stage of life. Biographic activity creates an opportunity to return to important memories, re-discover own potential, and encourage the participants to be active. The classes endow the participants' imagination

and help to discover their own potential, interests, to reveal needs and to face self-reflection.

The autobiographic activities accomplished within the framework of a workshop permit the introduction of social context, offer opportunity to exchange experiences or inspirations, or else, learn together with other participants, and finally, enable self-enrichment. Thus, it is beneficial to use the framework of a biographical workshop to introduce tasks not only promoting autobiographical awareness of the participants, or inspiring to write about themselves, but also to facilitate overcoming one's own barriers and change the interpretation of events. Ergo, they should empower finding new opportunities for shaping a person's own life, they should also be in the service of the reflexive attitude to everyday experience, and inspire undertaking actions so as to break foregoing patterns. By means of comprehending the past, a person may obtain a chance of creating the future actively. The act of reconstructing the life story may become the rudiment of future experiences and discovering new possibilities and meanings.

A biographic workshop facilitates the process of self-cognition, and getting to know other people; it enables the participants to organize events and experiences, and it fosters narrative thinking. Workshop circumstances inspire creating a picture of the whole life, and viewing the life from bird's eye perspective, both of which help to achieve a kind of synthesis (Demetrio, 2009:129). What gradually emerges is the process of becoming mature - **straying and finding** one's own fate (Lalak, 2010:99-142).

The assumption of the proposed biographic class is to inspire the participants to undertake actions that will bring about enrichment of the quality of the day-to-day practice. The topics and tasks suggested herein enhance the role of the auto-biographic activity, reinforce the value of organizing memories, and that of recalling past events. The theme of the workshop and the related exercises may be carried out in different age groups. However, it has to be stressed that there are various goals of autobiographic activities depending on the participants' age and stage of life. Such an approach results from the fact that people of various ages view their lives from different perspectives. Biographic exercises constitute a certain entirety; by means of analyzing their own past the participants refer to the present, in order to reflect on their own lives and to project their future. The tasks are varied, some of them are meant for groups, others are to be realized individually or in pairs, by virtue of their personal nature. There is also a possibility of administering additional exercises to be performed out of the classroom and subsequently commented on. As to autobiography, the volition of participation in particular exercises have to be emphasized. Another thing to be pointed out is the instructor's openness to the needs of the participants, as well as his/her ability to create the environment of mutual trust in the group. The main goal of the workshop is the reflection on life experiences, which, further on, results in inducing positive sensations and inspires to take up new actions, or, inspires to change the perspective of viewing events and noticing new abilities of a satisfying activity. The instructor focuses on searching for various meanings and

ways of interpretation of the presented life stories, also, helps to try and find new solutions to the projects that concern the future.

The common reflection in the group, questions asked of one another allow for describing positive aspects of the current life of the workshop participants. Apart from that, each participant is encouraged to deepen their own reflection by the exercises to be performed out of the classroom beyond the workshop scheduled time. In order to uprate the level of task performance, the participants are equipped with **flash cards** by the instructor. The cards encourage activity out of the workshop environment; additionally, the use of them while at work on the biographical task, away from the classroom, involves cooperation with people who originally do not participate in the workshop (e.g. family members, friends, etc.). The flash cards offered by the authors of the work, due to their visual form, strengthen the participants' interest in the topic and the biographical task. The cards enrich work on the accomplishment and facilitate return to the performed tasks at a deliberately chosen time; they inspire participants to act independently and also to share the autobiographic reflections with persons of their own choice. Finally, they constitute a form of workshop record, a form of a diary/memoir which is gradually built at sequential meetings as the result of the exercises performed (Lasocińska, Wawrzyniak, 2013).

Between Theoretical Obligation and Practice – Penitentiary Work with Senior Prisoners

Introduction: Models of penitentiary work with prisoners

There are many various perspectives, approaches and theories grounded in penitentiary pedagogy, originating from various disciplines regarding rehabilitation¹⁷⁴ influences, their essence and tasks¹⁷⁵. Still, “there is lack of one rehabilitation theory, that - when applied - would guarantee rehabilitative success in each case” (Pytka, 2008:74). Nevertheless, there is one common element of all these theories, i.e. the aim of such process, which is to correct the functioning of an individual in the society. It is an objective which very often concerns the penitentiary rehabilitation taking place in a prison, hence it is not easily accomplished, since the social isolation does not prepare for functioning properly at liberty (Machel, 2003:21).

In the literature on the subject three concepts of penitentiary work with prison may be distinguished:

1. rehabilitative (traditional, classic), represented by Cz. Czapów or L. Pytka,
2. aid-related (penitentiary-social, or consignment-social) represented by P. Stępniaak,
3. official (institutional and official) resulting from the binding legal regulations concerning imprisonment.

In the traditional model, therehabilitation influences are focused onthe correction of the socializationprocess of demoralized individuals displaying behavioral disorders, transgressing legal and social norms (Czapów, Jedlewski,

¹⁷⁴ The article tackles rehabilitation also referred to as *resocialization* in the literature on the subject.

¹⁷⁵ Rehabilitation is commonly perceived as “modification of behavior, emotional reconstruction, change in ‘social belonging’, growing in the culture, fulfilling needs, shaping appropriate social attitudes (Cz. Czapów), modifying incorrect parameters of the identity (M. Konopczyński), social reintegration and self-resocialization (L. Pytka), assistance in sustaining social bonds (P. Stępniaak), correcting disturbed interpersonal relations and inappropriate social roles (B. Urban), modification of the adapted social standards and system of values (J. Konopnicki), modification of incorrect social attitudes (K. Pospiszyl).

1971:25-40). Such approach bases on the triad: socialization – therapy – care, aiming at changes in the personality of a prisoner.

In consequence, the rehabilitation activities concern:

1. reaching the stage of internalizing values and constructive standards desired for the individuals themselves as well as for the surroundings (educational aspect);
2. treating, supplying or compensating various illnesses, harmful from the perspective of physical and mental health (therapeutic aspect);
3. fulfilling the needs as a manner of social work (the caretaking aspect)" (Pytka, 2005:304).
4. The rehabilitation concept of penitentiary work with prisoners is therefore focused in penal institutions on correctional influences, which should be of educational character. Otherwise, according to H. Machel (2003:50-55) the ideas of rehabilitation of the criminals will not come to realization.

Nevertheless, P. Stępniaak (2004:35) claims "the possibilities of traditionally understood rehabilitation of prisoners are gradually depleting". As a result, the idea of rehabilitation – particularly the penitentiary one "[...] is currently going through a serious crisis" The author believes that penitentiary influences must be adequate to the current social reality and therefore he proposes own, **aid-related concept of penitentiary work with prisoners**. It implies predominantly social and welfare functions of the penal institutions, basing on therapy and social support understood as providing prisoners with the assistance in sustaining social relations, ensuring conditions to function, enabling the return to existence at liberty in accordance with the social order. P. Stępniaak grounds the model of social and aid character of the penitentiary work with prisoners in the following triad of influences (Stępniaak, 1998:73):

1. social support – the most crucial element of work with prisoners, social reinforcement through social work;
2. therapy – therapeutic influences, psychotherapy, rehabilitation and medical care;
3. socialization – correctional influences on the personally towards "being good", programming rehabilitation influences, upbringing through work in a penal institution.

The main objective of social and penitentiary work with prisoners is "to prepare them to leave the penal institution and socially adapt to the open environment [...] by the reconstruction of prisoners' social point of references (work, accommodation, family bonds, environmental bonds, etc.)" (Stępniaak, 207:164). As for penitentiary influences, according to P. Stępniaak, the court social work is most important, however only when undertaken exclusively on the basis of so called legal mandate (the judicial decision) by specialized penitentiary and social services, accepted by prisoners, enabling them to set up a subsistence level of social conditions to live in accordance with the rule of law" (Stępniaak, 207:163).

Such influences refer not only to prisoners and the environment of a penal institution, but embrace also the open environments which prisoners come from and will return to after serving the sentence. Such permanent activities

are directed at social relations, cooperation with the prisoners' families and external institutions, carried out throughout the entire period of imprisonment, but also embracing the period at liberty, enabling prisoners to escape the stigma of the "prisoners", allowing them to set up conditions to "be good" at liberty.

Failing to implement various theoretical concepts into the penitentiary practice concerning assistance and rehabilitation of the prisoners would make **the penitentiary work solely of official character**, i.e. nothing but a formal and procedural execution of the regulations on deprivation of liberty in penal institutions.

Such model has been precisely defined by the legislative bodies in the codification of penal law, international law and other legal regulations – bills, recommendations and directives on executing deprivation of liberty and the penitentiary services¹⁷⁶.

Such a concept is most adequate for the normative understanding of the penitentiary work, assuming the intentional and programmed influences, undertaken towards the sentenced, the aim of which is to at least reach juridical improvement and prevention from reoffending. Therefore, the process is based on the penitentiary (rehabilitation) diagnosis and is of individual character (under Articles 79-100 of the Code of Penal Procedure) referring to such activities as:

1. vocational and comprehensive education (Articles 130-134 of the Code of Penal Procedure),
2. influences through work (Articles 121-129 of the Code of Penal Procedure),
3. influences through cultural, educational and sports activities (Articles 135-136a of the Code of Penal Procedure),
4. therapy (Article 117 of the Code of Penal Procedure),
5. disciplinary measures, rewards and punishment (Articles 137-149 of the Code of Penal Procedure),
6. formal cooperation with the prisoners' families (Articles 38-43 of the Code of Penal Procedure),
7. psychological assistance, preparation for existence at liberty prior to being released (Articles 164-168a of the Code of Penal Procedure).

The official model consists in the formal execution of deprivation of liberty, prison regulations, bureaucracy, schematization and routine within the five functions of the penal institution, which is the isolation, social-existence, as well as economic, administrative and rehabilitative function (Porowski, 1985:138-151).

The formalism of the assessment and routine in executing the regulation makes the penitentiary work limited to the activities of "the culture of seeming effort", where the functions and tasks assigned to prisons in order to accomplish

¹⁷⁶ Code of Penal Procedure, Minimum Procedures for Dealing with Prisoners, European Prison Rules, European Convention on Human Rights, Act of 9 April 2010 on Prison Service(-Journal of Laws: Dz. U. Nr 79, poz. 523), Ordinance of the *Minister of Justice* of 12 August 1998 on the regulation of executing deprivation of liberty, Ordinance of the *Minister of Justice* of 14 August 2003 on the penitentiary works in penal institutions and remand centres (Journal of Laws: Dz.U. Nr 151, poz. 1469 with later amendments), Directive no 2/2004 of the Head of the Prison Service dated 24 February 2004 on precise principles of accomplishment and organization of penitentiary work, range of duties of prison officers and staff of the penitentiary and therapeutic division (Dz.U. SW Nr 1, poz. 2, with later amendments) and others.

some goals are appropriately carried out, but only in theory as they are being affected by routine, and in consequence result in little efficiency. The cause of such phenomenon lies in the crisis of rehabilitation that is related to the lack of faith in:

- implementing pedagogical assumptions and directives of educational rehabilitation in the penitentiary practice,
- official rehabilitation coming down to limitation of the procedures of executing the prison regulations;
- efficiency of undertaken penitentiary influences.

Nevertheless, in a broader context, such activities – apart from some order kept in the files and seemingly appropriate functioning of the prisons – do not matter whatsoever as for reaching the global aim, i.e. empowering such features of the prisoners' personality, that would enable them to function in a society not only in a way so as not to disturb the legal regulations, but in a manner respecting many moral norms and standards important for the social life" (Machel, 2003:21).

The synthetic presentation of the three models of penitentiary work, that are assessed as contradictory (Stepniak, 2007), but also as mutually complementing each other (Pytka, 2005, 2008), is a starting point for further reflections over penitentiary tutors' activities towards the sentenced seniors (Grzesiak, 2011:92-111).

However, it is worth emphasizing that, in practice, penitentiary work is often eclectic, combining elements of given concepts, although the official model seems to be still the most common and predominant in the penal institutions.

On the basis of the analysis of the legal solutions adequate for penitentiary work, it must be stated that these are general regulations with no direct reference or recommendations for work with prisoners over 65 years of age. The sentenced seniors remain unnoticed and are not treated as a distinctive group. Hence, during the work with senior prisoners solely standard procedures are applied. For all age groups - apart from juvenile delinquents – there are equal regulations concerning the range, manner and system of imprisonment, as well as execution of the deprivation of liberty. And although there is a principle in the Polish penitentiary system that influences should be individualized, these are merely general rules that do not distinguish any age group of the sentenced. The legal provisions determine the general framework of penitentiary influences outlining the organization of rehabilitation groups or controlling and motivating the sentenced to participate in various activities, however these are tasks and duties carried out with regards to each of the sentenced regardless of their age.

An analysis of the pedagogical concepts and theories on penitentiary work also proves that none of the three models differentiate penitentiary influences on the basis of the age of senior prisoners.

The **classic concept** of penitentiary work does not imply differentiation of influences towards senior prisoners, despite the fact that the mentality of such prisoners is less prone to modification, hence the specificity of their needs is not respected. Nonetheless, the rehabilitative and educational activities should be adjusted to the recipient and be different for the minors, adults and seniors,

accordingly to the stages of development with physical, emotional and cognitive changes typical for given stage, as well as tasks dedicated to the phases of the life cycle, all in accordance with the paradigm of developmental psychology.

The **official model** does not acknowledge the difference between prisoners on the basis of the age group. In consequence, it results in a standard, formalized and procedural accomplishment of the regulations tackling the deprivation of liberty. Hence, it is inadequate in the case of senior prisoners due to their *bio-psycho-social* needs, senile dementia and the need for support even in their everyday functioning, or upon dealing with basic organizational tasks. The specificity of –senior prisoners is also not taken into account within the framework of the **aid model** of penitentiary work, despite the fact that the function of a penal institution in such perspective consists predominantly in social work, basing on therapy, social support and preparation for the existence at liberty. Nevertheless, it does not take into consideration the health condition of senior prisoners.

Therefore, it must be stated that in the Polish penitentiary system there are no concepts of work with seniors, neither legal solutions concerning prisoners over 65 years of age, that would normalize the penitentiary work with this group of prisoners. Moreover, the specificity of influence on senior prisoners is also neglected in the pedagogical perspective of penitentiary work. Hence, it may be assumed that in the Polish penitentiary practice, even if the eclectic manner of work is applied, there are only standard measures addressed to senior prisoners, regardless of their specificity due to their advanced age and other implied factors such as health, family relations, as well as social, mental and physical condition.

Senior prisoners and the penitentiary model of work

An increasing number of people growing old and seniors¹⁷⁷ already present in the population of many countries is reflected in the growing number of individuals from this age group in penal institutions (Frąckiewicz, 2002). Therefore, attention needs to be drawn to this generation (Zych, 1995). The necessity to explore this issue may be indicated by the fact that since 1990s the percentage of senior prisoners deprived of liberty has been systematically growing (Siemaszko, Gruszczyńska, Marczewski, 2009; Grzesiak, 2009). The interest in this aspect results from the worldwide process of ageing of the societies and the related rise in the number of imprisoned seniors. It takes place regardless of the relatively stable crime rate and stable overall number of prisoners. Hence, the impact of demographical and social factors on the current prison reality requires a common approach towards the penitentiary work and a coherent model of such

¹⁷⁷ The age of 65 has been acknowledged as the old age limit as the official and social criterion. The old age limit is undoubtedly symbolic, as the biological and mental processes of aging vary in each case. However, determining such limit is of social importance, as it concerns termination of professional activity and becoming retired.

work to be devised. Besides, it also implies a multidimensional diagnosis of the current situation of senior prisoners.

The literature on gerontology explicitly points out that advanced age and aging – as a stage of human's life – despite its individual course, is characterized by features and processes specific for the given phase (Steuden, 2011; Oleś 2011; Brzezińska, 2007; Straś-Romanowska, 2011). First of all, the old age differs from other stages by the overwhelming majority of regressive changes, occurring within three spheres of life, i.e. biological, social and mental. Those over 65 experience a decrease in their body function and physical abilities related to loss of mobility and deteriorating functioning of the senses, perceptive and motor processes, and last but not least - cognitive functions. Seniors are affected by deteriorated immunology and various stages of illnesses, particularly chronic ones and dementia-related. The process of aging is genetically determined, but also influenced by the lifestyle, level of personal hygiene, diet, attention to own health and environmental factors. Moreover, the process of aging involves changes in personality, emotions, aspirations and attitudes, decrease in the ability to adapt to changes, need to use the assistance of others, as well as loneliness and marginalization. These result from the termination of work activity, as well as life assessment and its quality. Moreover, such features, typical for this age group, may constitute grounds for reevaluation of life priorities.

Therefore, it is well-grounded to claim that in the work with senior prisoners activities should be predominantly of aid-related nature, based on social support and social work both in a penal institution and at liberty, while the sentence is being served and after its completion. Nonetheless, the classic approach is also worth considering, as it assumes that mental correctional actions shall not be given up, as they allow maintaining mental hygiene of the sentenced prisoners and constituting a tool of changing their negative attitudes.

While serving the sentence, this age group is particularly subject to reflections over their life, which could be a good starting point for the penitentiary rehabilitation of senior prisoners. Such activities should take place within institutional and official framework, in accordance with legal regulations within the state and international legislations, without exaggerated formalism and unnecessarily rigorous approach.

However, it must be emphasized that despite the development of gerontology, the application of this kind of knowledge into Polish penitentiary practice is scarce. The rehabilitation literature also lacks references concerning work with senior prisoners. And although in the past years first reports on penitentiary work with senior prisoners have been published, these are predominantly foreign publications tackling the situation of British seniors in prisons¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁸ See: *Older people in prison. A monitoring guide for IMBs*, Older People in Prison Forum, http://www.nicklemesurier.org/uploads/9/3/8/7/938735/id10735_imb_guide_older_people_in_prison_-_final_july_2011.pdf, accessed 25 April 2012; No problems – old and quiet: Older prisoners in England and Wales. A thematic review by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/publications/hmpiris/thematic-reports-and-research-publications/hmp-thematic-older-04-rps.pdf>, accessed 25 April 2012. Nacro – the crime reduction charity, <http://www.nacro.org.uk/>; Reports of The Prison Reform Trust devoted to the reform of prison services in Great Britain,

However, according to the foreign reports, the situation of sentenced seniors deprived of liberty is extremely negative. Due to – most frequently – poor health condition and inadequate medical or social care, senior prisoners are excluded from most of the activities accomplished in penal institutions. For the same reasons they very often experience various ailments affecting their everyday existence in a prison. Furthermore, conclusions from these reports indicate that in order to improve the situation of senior prisoners, the penitentiary work must take into account the specificity of this age group, their problems, needs, possibilities and limitations. Therefore, it has been necessary to carry out field research in order to find the answer to the question which model is more adequate in the practice of Polish prisons (Grzesiak, 2013)¹⁷⁹.

Assumptions of the research project

The subject of the research carried out was the manner of penitentiary work with senior prisoners, reconstructed on the basis of opinions of penitentiary tutors and senior prisoners.

The aim of the research was to diagnose the model of penitentiary work with men over 65 years old through the analysis of its character in selected penal institutions assessed by tutors and senior prisoners, as well as by examining interactions between senior prisoners, other prisoners and tutors.

The main aspect of the research project was the question on what the work with senior prisoners looks like in the penal institutions covered by the research.

The research focused on the accomplished strategy of penitentiary work with senior prisoners, as well as becoming familiar with the ideas of tutors and prisoners tackling work with those over 65. During the research of penitentiary work with senior prisoners, particular attention was drawn to the following issues:

1. Penitentiary tutors' influences on senior prisoners – activity programs, rehabilitation offered, cultural and educational activities accomplished individually, therapeutic programs, vocational trainings preparing for work with senior prisoners.

including: *Doing Time: the experiences and news of people in prison*, Prison Reform Trust 2008, <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Doing%20Time%20the%20experiences%20and%20needs%20of%20older%20people%20in%20prison.pdf>; Cooney F., Braggins J., *Doing Time: Good practice with older people in prison - the views of prison staff*, Prison Reform Trust 2010, <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/doing%20time%20good%20practice%20with%20older%20peop.pdf>; Howse K., *Growing Old in Prison. A scoping study on older prisoners*, <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Growing%20Old%20in%20Prison%20-%20a%20scoping%20study.pdf>, accessed 25 April 2012.

¹⁷⁹ The research was carried out within the Project of the author's PhD dissertation, funded by the National Science Centre. The complete analysis of the material gathered was drawn up as a doctoral dissertation defended in the Institute of Pedagogy at the University of Wrocław, and worked out as a publication entitled "Penitentiary work with senior prisoners", Wrocław 2013, ATUT publishing.

2. Mental, social and health needs and possibilities of senior prisoners deprived of liberty, adequacy of medical care provided by the prison medical health care.
3. Ailments affecting senior prisoners resulting from serving a prison sentence, organization of prison life and prison discipline.
4. Post-penitentiary assistance, needs and future plans of senior prisoners, level of their demoralization and social threat, previous deprivations of liberty as factors impacting on the protection against demoralization.
5. Relations with inmates and prison staff in the context of senior prisoners' security and hypothetical discrimination.

Taking the above into consideration, the main hypothesis was formulated as “ *penitentiary work with senior prisoners is based on eclectic, indirect (between the official and aid) manner, not on the rehabilitation manner. It was assumed that such factors as:*

1. age and health condition of senior prisoners,
2. lack of regulation in the legislation concerning prisoners over 65 years old,
3. features of the penal institution as a total institution,
4. formality and bureaucracy of the penitentiary work constitute a system barrier in accomplishing the rehabilitation manner of penitentiary work, and enhance the accomplishment of official manner with an element of a short-term aid.

The research project involved a quantitative method, determined by the acknowledged positivist paradigm of research, however the recalled statements of the researched were also subject to qualitative analysis. Moreover, the method of diagnostic survey and the technique of documents analysis were also applied, including questionnaire (questionnaires for non-seniors prisoners and penitentiary tutors) and interviews (an interview questionnaire for senior prisoners). Applying such manner of gathering and analyzing empirical material ensured reliability of the research carried out as well as objective, adequate and in-depth recognition of selected part of the social reality, i.e. the penitentiary work with the sentenced.

The research project concerned senior prisoners in Polish penal institutions. The research group was composed of men over 65, serving a sentence in selected prisons (minimum 5 seniors in the given prisons¹⁸⁰), whereas the reference group consisted of prisoners under 65 (non-seniors) serving sentences in the same institutions as seniors. The number of non-senior prisoners was proportional to the number of seniors in a given location. Moreover, the research group also included penitentiary tutors working in the institutions where the research was conducted. The prison staff was composed of both men and women. Altogether, the research covered 515 persons, including 397 prisoners (178 seniors and 219 non-seniors) and 188 penitentiary tutors.

On the basis of the specificity of the researched group it may be stated that:

¹⁸⁰ The units were selected on the basis of the data from Bureau of Information and Statistics of the Central Prison Services Management, BIS-0340/123/10/2747 dated October 28th 2010.

1. The sentenced seniors are mostly over 70 years old, having set up own family and are, or have been, married. The senior prisoners usually had primary education and with some learned profession, mostly as physical laborers, and had been sentenced already as pensioners. They were usually serving a long period of deprivation of liberty for the first time. Senior prisoners predominantly committed crimes against health and human life, also against the family and care, property and traffic safety (the so-called "cyclists"), moreover, they had usually committed these crimes under the influence of alcohol.
2. The sentenced non-seniors are mostly single men in their mid-30s, with primary or vocational education. Most often their learned profession involves physical labor. They had most frequently worked before imprisonment and went to prison because of crimes against property, family, care, health and human life. They usually served long-term sentences for the first time in prison.
3. Penitentiary tutors are mostly men in their mid-30s with higher humanistic education, often with pedagogical background, for whom working in a prison as a tutor is the only professional experience of about 7 years.

Penal institutions with a closed and half-open character were the area of exploration (located within 9 regional inspectorates of the Prison Service) where inmates serve their sentence for their first time, however these were also institutions for re-offenders. Penal institutions carry out ordinary, programmed and therapeutic tasks and obligations. The selection of such broad area of exploration was justified by the location of senior prisoners, who remain in various Polish prisons in relatively small proportion (a few up to a dozen in one location). The research was carried out from October 2010 to September 2011. The precise data on the area of the research exploration and given categories of those researched are shown in the table below.

Table 1. The area of research project exploration and researched groups

| Regional inspectorates of the Prison Service Name of the penal institution | | Researched group | | Group of reference Sentenced | Units capacity* |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------|--------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| | | Seniors | Tutors | | |
| Bydgoszcz | Penal institution Potulice | 6 | 11 | 14 | 1127 |
| Gdańsk | Penal institution Gdańsk-Przeróbka | 11 | 3 | 14 | 1018 |
| | Penal institution Sztum | 4 | 5 | 2 | 624 |
| Kraków | Penal institution Tarnów | 14 | 14 | 9 | 1014 |
| | Penal institution Tarnów-Mościce | 2 | 6 | 11 | 371 |
| | Penal institution Pińczów | 9 | 4 | 9 | 750 |
| Koszalin | Penal institution Czarne | 18 | 8 | 11 | 1420 |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|-----|-----|-----|-------|
| Lublin | Penal institution Hrubieszów | 6 | 0 | 8 | 363 |
| | Penal institution Zamość | 7 | 7 | 10 | 636 |
| Łódź | Penal institution Garbalin | 12 | 10 | 20 | 960 |
| | Penal institution 2 w Łodzi | 6 | 1 | 3 | 167 |
| | Penal institution Sieradz | 8 | 5 | 6 | 903 |
| Opole | Penal institution 1 in Strzelce Opolskie | 12 | 11 | 28 | 1020 |
| Poznań | Penal institution Rawicz | 11 | 6 | 9 | 826 |
| | Penal institution Gębarzewo | 9 | 5 | 9 | 595 |
| Wrocław | Penal institution Kłodzko | 9 | 9 | 15 | 633 |
| | Penal institution 2 in Wrocław | 3 | 3 | 5 | 612 |
| | Penal institution Oleśnica | 7 | 1 | 8 | 165 |
| | Penal institution Strzelin | 8 | 2 | 4 | 783 |
| | Penal institution 1 in Wrocław | 11 | 6 | 18 | 1286 |
| | Penal institution Wołów | 5 | 1 | 6 | 1066 |
| 9 regional inspectorates of the Prison Service | 21 penal institutions | 178 | 118 | 219 | 16339 |

Source: http://sw.gov.pl/Data/Files/001142rdeb/2011-09-09_szczegolowa-informacja-o-zaludnieniu-oddzialow-mieszkalnych.pdf, accessed: 9 September 2011

The aims, research questions and hypotheses enabled the researchers to recognize the accomplished manner of penitentiary work with senior prisoners, and allowed the recognition of their specific features, which determine the influences undertaken. Moreover, it enabled the author to propose recommended manner of penitentiary work with senior prisoners, taking into consideration their specificity.

The accomplished manner of tutors' penitentiary work with senior prisoners

Owing to the analysis of the empirical material gathered, it was possible to reveal the data how the work with senior prisoners looked like in the researched penal institutions.

1. The research proved that penitentiary work with senior prisoners was predominantly of official manner with elements of aid, not based on the rehabilitation concept.

As a result of the profound analysis of the material gathered, normative acts and the literature on the subject, it was determined, that the age and health conditions of senior prisoners, lack of legal regulations concerning elderly people in penal institutions, features of the prison as a total institution and formality

of the penitentiary work hinder the accomplishment of the rehabilitation manner concurrently resulting in carrying out the official manner with elements of a short-term aid.

As far as poor health conditions and health are concerned, as well as therapeutic needs and related educational deficiencies, tutors assist senior prisoners in the formal and legal matters. Hence, the Polish penal institutions accomplish official manner with elements of aid. Nonetheless, legislative measures and methods of penitentiary influences in the case of senior prisoners are less diverse than with other age groups. As regards senior prisoners, there are practically no work activities, learning or sports of any kind. Such situation is caused by the character of the system in which inmates serve the sentence of deprivation of liberty. According to the existing manner of penitentiary work with senior prisoners, penitentiary units are overwhelmingly treated as "storehouses for social rejects" subordinated to the needs of the state (Machel, 2003) where the sentenced are entirely dependent on the prison staff and the relations between prison officers and prisoners are formal and imposed by the necessity to accomplish official duties and provide current assistance in formal and official matters. The relations may also concern issues related to poor health condition (providing medical care).

2. The official manner of penitentiary work with elements of short-term aid accomplished in practice with senior prisoners is predominantly determined by the health conditions and age of the sentenced.

The senior prisoners are very often ill and suffer from a number of ailments resulting from their advanced age. Therefore, they are less physically fit and independent, requiring more assistance or even being taken care of by the prison staff. Besides, the poor health condition of senior prisoners often hinders participation in various penitentiary influences addressed to the general prison population. As a result, senior prisoners serve their sentence passively, spending most of the time in the prison cell. It is also caused by organizational and formal insufficiencies in meeting health needs and providing appropriate medical care, hence senior prisoners experience double punishment – prison isolation and discrimination on the grounds of age and health condition (extermination through inappropriate diet, exclusion from activities and marginalization in penitentiary works).

3. Lack of legal regulations concerning senior prisoners is also crucial for accomplishment of penitentiary tasks with this age group in the official concept as well as in case of hypothetical, short-term aid.

The law regulates penitentiary activities, hence the accomplished manner of penitentiary work with senior prisoners relies on it. However, the age criterion is only applied in the case of juvenile delinquents, as a result of the insignificant number of sentenced in the population of this age group. In turn, such lack of specificity of penitentiary work with senior prisoners brings about standardization of activities, evoking depersonalization.

Due to the lack of specification of the age group of those over 65 (as it takes place in the case of juvenile delinquents), legislation marginalizes seniors, as, for instance, some procedures indirectly limit the possibility of seniors participating in some forms of penitentiary activities, whereas young prisoners are privileged in this respect. As a result, because the failure to distinguish this age category of prisoners, the legislator has marginalized penitentiary influences addressed to them.

4. Furthermore, institutional features of the penal institution also contribute to the domination of official manner with elements of aid in penitentiary work with senior prisoners.

The difficulties and obstacles resulting from the organization and execution of the deprivation of liberty mainly affect prisoners, but also have impact on the organization of penitentiary work. The following factors of institutional environment of seniors imprisonment are particularly disturbing and often cause withdrawal from the contacts with the surroundings (i.e. the relationships with tutors and other prisoners):

- limitation of time and space;
- limitation of intimacy and freedom;
- inability to make decisions concerning the prisoner's own matters;
- necessity to subordinate to obligations and prohibitions;
- external control of the code of conduct.

Senior prisoners experience deprivation of the sense of security, which significantly affects their relationships with other inmates. Passive approach may result in their being perceived as victims, hence they might be subject to discrimination, abuse and humiliation. Such treatment of senior prisoners by the prison staff and inmates is often related to the stereotypical perception of senior inmates as weak, sick, helpless and decrepit, which easily makes them an object of underestimation and mockery. The prison environment is a place where negative stigmatization of senior prisoners is common, additionally intensified by the institutional features of penal institutions and often ailments experienced by the elderly. On the other hand, placing juveniles with senior prisoners makes the latter experience discrimination, and humiliation as they become exposed to abuse.

A multitude of factors related to the penitentiary isolation, institutional features of penal institutions and prison community, undoubtedly negatively affect the personality of senior prisoners, hence the opinion that these conditions do not favor the process of rehabilitation is justified (Śliwowski, 1981:11-74). Moreover, punishing seniors strengthens prejudice against this age group and leads to various types of discrimination (Zych, 2001:60).

5. Formality and bureaucracy of penitentiary influences towards senior prisoners constitute another important factor determining the official manner of work with elements of short-term aid.

Direct penitentiary influences towards senior citizens depend on the size of tutoring groups. A large number of prisoners to one tutor hinders the possibility

of devoting the restricted time to individual tutoring conversations and support in solving various matters and issues of prisoners, because of the necessity to prepare current documentation and various administrative duties of penitentiary tutors. Such approach of the tutors and senior prisoners towards penitentiary work proves that both sides are unconvinced as to the legitimacy of serving sentence by seniors because of the specific tasks and influences they require. First of all, they require assistance in maintaining good health and mental hygiene, as well as rehabilitation, and in the case of personality disorders, they need psychiatric treatment. Moreover, due to their senile dementia and lack of self-criticism, therapeutic or rehabilitation influences towards them are not systematic, rather selective and do not cause the expected outcomes, hence are perceived and assessed as pointless.

Recognizing the accomplished manner of penitentiary work with senior prisoner - in accordance with aims and research problems in the context of the premises of rehabilitative, aid and official concept - allowed the drawing of the final conclusion that the **dominating manner of penitentiary work with senior prisoners is of official and aid-related character.**

Recommended manner of penitentiary work with senior prisoners

On the basis of the empirical material gathered, it was also possible to recommend some changes in the manner of accomplishing penitentiary influences towards senior prisoners. **The recommended** manner of work with senior prisoners shall be of aid character with elements of treatment and care-taking activities. It should assist the sentenced seniors in preparation for being released from prisons, sustain social relationships and existence at liberty in accordance with social standards. Therefore, work with seniors requires influences originating from social support and therapy, but first of all – assistance. Hence, activities undertaken in this respect should be acknowledged and accepted by prisoners who would manifest genuine willingness to change. Furthermore, the works should be based on cooperation with the open society, in particular the senior's family. The activities should be also adjusted to the individual needs and abilities of a senior prisoner, related to his age and health condition.

1. Due to the increased exposure to sickness, more frequent health problems, ailments typically related to old age, senile dementia, memory loss, changes in the nervous system, personality disorders, depression and often alcohol addiction, penitentiary work with senior prisoners shall be predominantly of aid, care-taking, healing and rehabilitative character, and when needed – therapeutic.
2. Architectural and organizational solutions should be implemented in order to assist senior prisoners in their everyday functioning in prison, e.g. equipping bathrooms with landings, placing seniors on the ground floor or in warm and light rooms, introducing an appropriate diet. It is also crucial to instill hygienic habits in seniors as their lack was emphasized by the tutors and inmates from the reference group taking part in the research. Therefore, it is necessary to provide the seniors with

- regular and frequent use of bathrooms equipped with special hand-grips, railings and chairs that would enable them to take care of their personal hygiene safely and on their own.
3. Furthermore, it is important to implement alternatives to the deprivation of liberty in the case of senior prisoners, such as the system of electronic surveillance, or placement in units providing rehabilitation and treatment. If such measure cannot be applied in the case of senior prisoners, they must be provided with adequate, specialist medical care in isolation.
 4. The recommended project of strategy of penitentiary work with senior prisoners requires an increase in the time devoted to individual work and assistance addressed to senior prisoners, as well as the limitation of the time spent by tutors on administrative work, i.e. it is necessary to establish appropriate conditions for penitentiary influences towards senior prisoners. Such solution implies a reduction of the number of group participants and an increase in the penitentiary staff, so the tutoring groups would not exceed 30 members.
 5. As far as legal solutions are concerned, it would be helpful to take into account the category of senior prisoners, i.e. those who are over 65, and providing them with penitentiary aid, care-taking and healing activities adequate to their age, needs and health conditions. The penal institution regulations should consider individual mental, health and social needs of the elderly. If, for instance, seniors cannot participate in sports activities, they should have alternative forms of activities offered, in order to avoid their marginalization and discrimination.
 6. Increased activation of the sentenced seniors participating in various activities and programs taking into consideration their specificity and adequate classification should be applied towards those who are inclined to participate in such actions, willing to change and cooperate. Such activities should also concern those who, due to various reasons such as poor health condition or characteropathy, can only be the subject of mental hygiene influences. Perceiving senior prisoners as a specific category of inmates would also require granting them some time to adapt to the circumstances of prison isolation, and then, the necessity to determine in what type of the system a senior prisoner is to serve the sentence. Such solution would allow senior prisoners to get familiar with the functioning in a penal institution, binding rules and differences between given systems of serving the sentence of deprivation of liberty, so the premises of each of the systems would be understandable for prisoners, so in consequence they could make an informed choice.
 7. Moreover, the recommended strategy of penitentiary work with senior prisoners requires careful selection of inmates allocated to cells with senior prisoners, not allowing juveniles to be placed with seniors in one room. While locating seniors in cells, the age criterion should be the priority, so the co-inmates would be of similar age as the seniors. Such solution would increase the probability of sharing interests and needs, hence

- enabling harmonious coexistence, better mutual understanding and sense of security. Placing senior citizens with peers shall not be considered as age segregation, but as providing them with a sense of security and preventing them from abuse.
8. The recommended manner of penitentiary work with senior prisoners also requires adequate vocational training for prison tutors working with this age group. Training penitentiary tutors should include the aspects of aging and needs as well as possibilities of seniors, with typical senile ailments, and adequate measures and method of influences towards this age group of prisoners. Penitentiary work with senior prisoners does not only require rehabilitative preparation, but first of all the knowledge on geriatric rehabilitation, as the research results proved that the phenomenon of ageism is present among the tutors, causing stereotypical perception of the sentenced seniors as weak, decrepit, apathetic, and helpless, which results in their exclusion from the penitentiary influences. Such approach towards the seniors acknowledges the necessity to consider gerontological issues in the training for tutors in order to overcome their prejudices or marginalization of the seniors, and to adjust the penitentiary work to the needs, possibilities and limitations of this age group of prisoners.
 9. In the recommended model of the aid pattern of penitentiary work with senior prisoners, with elements of care-taking and healing, as well as rehabilitative activities, it is of paramount importance to readapt the prisoners socially. Hence, the objective of the aid and re-adaptive activities is to sustain social bonds, prepare senior prisoners to leave the prison and establish social relationships in their further life according to social standards. It requires reorganization of local communities and encouraging them to participate in the areas of penal institution activities related to the influences towards senior prisoners. Therefore, the sentenced seniors shall not be placed in closed institutions, where sustaining contacts with the world outside is significantly restricted. Penitentiary work with senior prisoners shall be also linked to local assistance and medical units, as well as to non-governmental organizations, so senior prisoners released from prison could count on their social and welfare support, assistance in finding accommodation or resolving health issues.

The research outcomes gathered indicate the necessity and justify the idea of establishing the aid model of penitentiary work with seniors. Activities of care-taking, healing and re-adaptive nature should constitute its crucial elements, referring to the premises of the geriatric rehabilitation. The application of the above-presented recommendations during the work with senior prisoners in penal institutions could bring about its improvement.

Conclusions – Summary

The analysis of the outcomes of own research and interdisciplinary literature gathered on the subject, concerning penitentiary work and seniors, leads to certain conclusions. Therefore, in compliance with empirical and theoretical assumptions, the following is recommended:

1. During the work with senior prisoners the specificity of this age group must be taken into consideration.

In penitentiary influences towards prisoners over 65, it is necessary to take into account their specificity, mental, physical and social conditions, as well as abilities. Therefore, such work should be adjusted to their needs. Following the geriatric premises, while working with senior prisoners, the accents should be put on their activation, preventing from exclusions, stigmatization, marginalization, gerontophobia and prisonization of the sentenced seniors. By the use of penitentiary work respecting the specificity of the senior prisoners, pathological nature of the mental features should be minimized, taking into consideration that they tend to intensify during the process of aging in the circumstances of penitentiary isolation.

2. The manner of work with senior prisoners should significantly rely on the aid model with particular attention drawn to the needs and health capabilities of the sentenced seniors.

The premises of the assistance model of penitentiary work should be predominating while working with seniors, as it implies providing social support and therapy in order to change the prisoners, so they could function at liberty in a socially acceptable manner. It is essential to pay attention to the senior prisoners' family relationships, which should remain sustained. However, it requires working out special assistance and re-adaptive programs dedicated to senior prisoners, as such projects would take into account their bio-psycho-social needs including mental and physical fitness. Penitentiary influences towards senior prisoners should be adequate and provide them with various activities tailored to their needs and physical limitations. Nonetheless, providing senior prisoners with appropriate medical care and social services is equally crucial as they have special health needs, including the need to undergo regular check-ups, or specialist tests, but also concerning geriatric care and rehabilitation equipment. It is also important for penitentiary tutors to support the senior prisoners in their daily existence in the prison, as well as provide them with post-penitentiary care.

3. Penitentiary work with senior prisoners also relies on „rehabilitation through senile dementia“.

Penitentiary work with senior prisoners should essentially base on encouraging prisoners to modify their personality under the influence of their own reflections accompanying the aging process thanks to some therapeutic activities and penitentiary influences adequate for the needs and abilities of the

sentenced. The rise of reflectiveness among senior prisoners should be used as a starting point for the modification of their attitudes towards a socially accepted approach. Gerontological literature indicates various viewpoints towards own age and aging, as well as types of old age, which – if diagnosed – may enhance the working out of adequate ways of exerting influence.

4. Development of geriatric rehabilitation.

Development of such field of science should be accomplished by carrying out research work, publishing the results and applying the outcomes in the penitentiary practice of work with senior prisoners, but also in the institutions in the open society. Nevertheless, the penitentiary gerontology should also take into consideration the issue of double stigmatization of senior prisoners due to the fact that they are serving a sentence and the fact they are aging, what may bring about a rise in the ageism phenomenon.

The issues described above, resulting from theoretical premises and own research on penitentiary work with senior prisoners, should be predominantly treated as a point of reference for developing a concept of penitentiary work with senior prisoners, referring to the specificity of prisoners over 65, especially in the context of a rising number of those aging and those already advanced in age, remaining in penal institutions.

ENDING

Innovations of the EduCare project

Introduction

The EduCare project (Education for Care) aims to develop an innovative model of training for adults intended for a profession, that is becoming the main form of assistance for the elderly, in the European countries such as Italy, Poland, Romania and Spain: the elderly carer. The central objective of this pilot training program is to transfer knowledge and develop skills to carers in Europe, so as to:

- change the negative perception of caregivers to the elderly,
- forward awareness of the role of carers for carers themselves,
- revisit caregivers' role,
- support active aging.

The general objective of this pilot training program is developing “new carers for new elderly people”, through changing the negative perception of caregivers to the elderly and developing their knowledge, skills and competence.

The EduCare methodology is applied to all beneficiaries in the ‘chain’, to the trainers of elderly carers, through organizations and institutions to which they refer, caregivers and the elderly people. Training Program for trainers and carers includes classroom training, coaching, project work and training on platform web 2.0. Training Program aims to teach trainers and carers a new model of caregiving, which support active ageing.

The EduCare Project is divided into different tasks. According to the objectives and functions of this innovative training system, the key elements of the methodology are:

1. Needs analysis and scientific review,
2. Methodology and evaluation feature,
3. Training, project work and tutoring,
4. Web 2.0 Platform Design,
5. Evaluation of the experiences carried out and format release: trial,
6. Dissemination,
7. Exploitation planning.

The Partners in the EduCare project are Tuscia University, Viterbo, Italy (www.unitus.it), The Human Resources and Development company Entropy Knowledge Network, Rome, Italy (www.entropykn.net), The Basic and Clinical Psychology and Psychobiology Department of Universitat Jaume I, Spain (www.

ujj.es), The Jan Kochanowski University, Kielce, Poland (www.ujk.edu.pl) and Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania (www.ubbcluj.ro).

The EduCare project's innovative character lies in the areas of communication-relationship of the elderly on the side of trainees' trainers. EduCare highlights coaching as a key activity, thus giving more weight to communication skills and interpersonal and management of contextual difference, altering the current provisions of the national standard modules. Active ageing requires new skilled caregivers with enhanced personal qualities and abilities, and requires reference figures capable of providing the family with assistance after their training with daily help when handling critical situation.

Innovations in learning practices are an important expected outcome of EduCare. Trainers and carers are involved in the trial: it transfers the skills to deliver services to the elderly, as well as formalise two professions. EduCare Consortium intends to reach this goal thanks to an original learning methodology, which includes classroom training, coaching, project work and training on platform web 2.0.

The following paragraphs present the trial in Poland, and analyses two innovations involved in the project: coaching and e-learning.

Trial in Poland

The training took place from November 2013 to April 2014. In line with the assumptions the training courses lasted 36 hours of lessons and were conducted by the EduCare project team (4 persons). The training courses were held in teaching rooms of the Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce.

The training courses were started with outlining the fundamental tasks and objectives of the EduCare programme and a short introduction to the researches on the diagnosis of needs of seniors and their carers carried out within the project. The characteristics of a carer of an older person in terms of EduCare were outlined.

All materials prepared by EduCare teams in partner countries were used during classes; also, some author's materials were added. Each time the classes were composed of two parts: one – of purely theoretical nature and the other – of practical and workshop nature, i.e. the participants of classes through the use of activating methods and by performing planned and controlled tasks arrived at common solutions that were analogous to the theory on their own. By using the previously developed strategies they had the opportunity (on an outpatient basis) to practice specific behaviours in specific (simulated) situations that would lead to optimal solutions and demonstration of desired behaviours and actions in the care of seniors. The classes were held in a friendly atmosphere characterised by full understanding of individual needs of the participants, their learning strategies and perceptions of their own role.

Persons involved in the project were divided into four groups: coaches, trainers, carers and seniors. The first group of coaches consisted of 4 persons – 3 female (F) and 1 man (M) aged 43-48, academic teachers with PhD degree, with

knowledge in the field of pedagogy and gerontology, interpersonal communication, coaching, information technology and experience in teaching.

The second group initially included 17 persons, but two of them did not take up the work with the project method. Ultimately, the group of trainers was composed of 15 persons – 10F and 5M. Persons aged 40-49, i.e. 9 persons (7 F and 2 M), constituted the largest group among them. 4 persons were between 30 and 39 years of age (2 F and 2 M), and 2 persons were over 50 years of age (1 F and 1 M). All persons belonging to this group had full and complete university degree and completed various types of courses and forms improving their vocational skills. This group was composed of 6 academics with PhD degrees employed at the University and 9 persons who were professionally active social workers (employed in seniors' clubs and social welfare homes).

The third group of carers was composed of 15 persons (13 F and 2 M). This was a group of young people, because as many as 8 persons were between 20 and 29 (7 F and 1 M) years of age, 5 were between 30 and 39 (5 F) years of age and 2 between 40 and 49 (1 F and 1 M) years of age. 9 persons of them were employees of aid institutions (8 F and 1 M), and 6 (5 F and 1 M) – undergraduates in the third year at the faculty of Pedagogy (5 F) and Social Work (1 M).

The group of seniors consisted of 15 retired persons (14 F and 1 M). 5 seniors were aged 60-69 (4 F and 1 M), the remaining 10 F were aged 70 or older. Only 1 F was married, the remaining 14 persons included 13 widows and 1 widower. All persons live alone in small one- or two-bedroom flats. 14 persons have children who live separately, often far away from them. 1 F widow has no children. 6 women were chronically ill (diabetes and cardiovascular diseases), the remaining persons enjoy good health, all are plagued by loneliness. 12 F declared their distrust of carers taking up the project work with them. All persons participating in the project were notified there of and treated it as new and interesting experience.

Coaching as a new method of caregivers' professional training

Coaching was understood in the EduCare project as a chain training, in form of a cascade, where individuals work with each other by making couples such as teachers/coaches - trainers; trainers - caregivers; and finally caregivers – seniors. This kind of work demanded mutual and joint support in achieving goals, developing a system of “searching for” own personal resources and support strategies, high self-motivation and additional stimulation to perform particular actions.

15 trainers from the Polish side were trained during the courses organised specially for this purpose. Then, all trainers were assigned to one of the coaches. Three coaches were taking care of 4 trainers, one – 3. The division was made mainly on the basis of the workplace of the trainers. The first group was composed of academics; the second – employees of seniors' clubs, the third – employees of the Municipal Family Assistance Centre in Kielce, the fourth – employees of support centres for people with Alzheimer's disease and others. Each of the

trainers met with his/her coach every time when he/she needed assistance. The first meeting was always organisational. At the meeting each of the coaches provided the trainers with the information on the objective of their further work and alerted them to the necessity of making the right choice of carers. The characteristics of a future carer/assistance of a senior and possibilities of cooperating with a senior were discussed in the first place. Further meetings were held individually whenever the trainers signalled the need for a meeting or discussion on difficult issues, which they encountered during the work with carers.

During the trial the trainers encountered several problems that are:

- Fear that they will fail to show sufficient competences to support carer, doubts in their own abilities;
- Concern about the time which they must spend on working with a carer, if it does not interfere with job responsibilities;
- Fear of what they have to do if a carer makes an incorrect diagnosis of a senior;
- Difficulties in working out carers' motivations to take up work under the project;
- Difficulties in motivating carer to use the platform;
- Lack of belief in one's own effectiveness in training of carers;
- Technical problems with equipment owned by carers, which was reflected into the lack of possibility to use the platform.

The coaches tried to respond to the trainers needs by:

- Strengthening the trainers' belief in themselves by assuring that they have sufficient competences to support carers;
- Suggesting some methods for reconciling job responsibilities and the work with carers – e.g. by providing them with ready-to-use materials to master, using free time at work to discuss the problem, suggesting them to consult professional literature, using electronic mail, etc.
- Joint analysis of behaviours and reactions of seniors;
- Support by publishing materials for which the trainers asked on the platform and providing them with specialist literature;
- Making the trainers realise that to motivate carer they can take advantage of the importance of the project – show its importance, innovativeness and role which carers play in the project.
- Encouraging them to self-education in order broaden the knowledge in the field of care of older people.

Final assessment of the coaching

At various stages of the project the relationships between coaches and trainers were of different nature; initially, they were very formal; then they gradually became less and less formal; they grew even into a friendship, give a lot of satisfaction and pleasure to both parties. The distance between the coaches and trainers was gradually reduced, and the mutual relationships were more and more characterised by enormous trust and friendship. The trainers particularly

valued the opportunity to discuss many points of views on the problem that they encountered from many perspectives. Rapid response from the coaches to the reported problems, have also earned their recognition. The authenticity and sincerity of the coaches as well as the fact that they could always rely on their coaches who, within their abilities, gave them assistance were considered by the trainers to be particularly beneficial. The trainers valued such form of assistance because they knew that they would not be left alone with a problem that they encountered, but they could always count on the support of their coaches. They stressed, however, that the real effects of the coaching work would be more visible if the project lasted longer.

E-learning as an innovative tool for caregivers' training

E-learning platform used as an auxiliary tool in the education of trainers and carers of seniors was evaluated by the coaches, trainers and carers in two scales: Satisfaction Scale and SUS, prepared by the Spanish partner. The tables below show the results of the survey on the Satisfaction Scale of coaches, trainers and carers (table 1) and the System Usability Scale (table 2).

Table1: Results of the survey on the Satisfaction Scale of coaches, trainers and carers

| | Questions | Teachers/ Coaches | Trainers | Carers |
|---|--|----------------------|----------|--------|
| 1 | To what extent do you find logic the EDUCARE.WEB platform to train in elderly care? | 6.0 | 6.0 | 7.9 |
| 2 | To what extent are you satisfied with the training received in elderly care with EDUCARE.WEB platform? | 3.0 | 2.6 | 8.0 |
| 3 | To what extent would you recommend this system to other colleagues? | 2.0 | 1.3 | 6.0 |
| 4 | To what extent the EDUCARE.WEB platform would be useful to train in care of other populations? | 3.5 | 2.0 | 7.1 |
| 5 | To what extent was the EDUCARE.WEB platform useful in your case to learn or bring back information about elderly care? | 7.5 | 7.7 | 7.3 |
| 6 | To what extent was the EDUCARE.WEB platform tedious to use? | 6.5 | 5.4 | 3.5 |
| | Average | 4.75 | 4.2 | 6.6 |

Table 2. Results of the survey on the System Usability Scale (SUS)

| | Questions | Teachers/ Coaches | Trainers | Carers |
|----|---|----------------------|----------|--------|
| 1 | I think that I would like to use this Web platform frequently | 2.2 | 2.0 | 2.4 |
| 2 | I found the Web platform unnecessarily complex | 3.0 | 2.0 | 3.5 |
| 3 | I thought the Web platform was easy to use | 3.25 | 3,2 | 3.6 |
| 4 | I think that I would need the support of a technical person to be able to use this Web platform | 3,25 | 2,9 | 3.0 |
| 5 | I found the various functions in this Web platform were well integrated | 1,5 | 1,7 | 2.0 |
| 6 | I thought there was too much inconsistency in this Web platform | 3,75 | 3,6 | 2.0 |
| 7 | I would imagine that most people would learn to use this Web platform very quickly | 3,75 | 3.4 | 4.0 |
| 8 | I found the Web platform very cumbersome to use | 3,25 | 1,8 | 3.8 |
| 9 | I felt very confident using the Web platform | 3,0 | 1.7 | 3.0 |
| 10 | I needed to learn a lot of things before I could get going with this Web platform | 4,0 | 2.3 | 1.8 |
| | Average | 3.1 | 2.5 | 3.0 |

In the light of the obtained results carers who received the highest scores in all questions have the greatest satisfaction from the use of the platform for training. All groups were of the opinion that the platform is an excellent place for gaining information about senior since very well developed and matter-of-fact materials that are needed for the work with older people were gathered in one place. The trainers gained the lowest scores for the platform on the Satisfaction Scale. Such low scores were probably dictated by the fact that all trainers participating in the training encountered for the first time this form of education and treated it with distrust. One of the reasons for such discrepancy in the results between the group of trainers and group of carer was probably the age of the persons participating in the project. The group of trainers was predominantly composed of persons of over 40 years of age who are active professionally, use information technologies to an elementary extent in their work and use the Internet to a limited extent, whereas the group of carer was mainly composed of young people (student) who are interested in the world and its technical innovations, who can skilfully make use of information technologies and who have no qualms about using also the areas of the Internet which are unfamiliar to them to penetrate, learn and broaden knowledge. Some participants treated the use of

tools available on the platform as not only a way to learn something, but also as the possibility to widen one's own knowledge of computers and computer skills.

In the opinion of the coaches the platform can be used as a tool to support the process of preparation for the work of future carers/assistants of seniors. However, it may not be the primary form of knowledge transfer. The use of the platform required the users to have basic IT skills, but it was not difficult. Limited features of the platform result also from the very nature of the care for which we prepare carers; it is to be a relationship, and hence, primarily a meeting, being interpersonal.

The advantages of the platform are as follows: many ways of communication gathered in one place – chat, electronic mail, discussion groups, wikis, forums on particular issues, Wiki, easy modification, distribution, update and upgrade of the training content, rapid transfer of various materials, possibility of providing users with the latest and most needed training content, greater possibilities of verification of difficult terms, easy to use. Thanks to the possibility of rapid communication with the instructor and other users through the form or chat a participant of the course may receive answers to his/her questions and guidance as to further independent learning on an on-going basis. The regular mentoring of persons responsible for the training allows for substantive and technical support for course participants. Moreover, the inspiration to voice opinions and share one's own feelings with other about the course and independent learning and commenting on the quality of the materials published may be mobilising for both parties to the process – the coaches and the participants. Justifying one's own position and presenting arguments, for example, for a change of the range of topics covered during some lesson units may contribute to not only an improvement in the quality of education, but also to a better understanding of the needs of persons using the platform. International area, thanks to which the participant can learn from experience and solutions used in other countries, seems to be an interesting proposal as well.

Weaknesses of the platform – were rather not indicated. However, many participants commented on the limitations on building relationships that may result from the use of the platform to communicate with others. According to the coaches, lack of direct contact with the instructor conducting the course may lead to limitations of interactions between people participating in the training. In such situation there will be no opportunity to show the sensitivity of the participants of the training, their emotions and actual approach to the training. Moreover it will be impossible to look at the encountered or analysed problem in a broader context. Some persons would not be able to activate themselves since they will be resistant to voice their opinion on chat or discussion form; they could only become passive recipient of the content published on the platform. Some users would feel restricted due to the necessity of having good equipment (and thus, they would need to incur higher costs associated with the access to the platform).

The platform is an effective tool for carers education and gives a lot of chances to modify the process in changing environments and conditions. Some possibilities of the improvement of the learning quality are:

- To insert interactive tests who would be conducted in an automatic way (the participant of the course would be able to proceed only after he/she indicates all correct answers; these tests would not have the option of indicating places where the e-learner made a mistake, which would mobilise him/her to complement the knowledge, consult with the trainer, look for answers in literature or on the Internet);
- Videoconferencing, during which the participant would have the opportunity to listen to each other, hear and see the coach, which would be probably very helpful since it would ensure interactions and enable a visual contact with the coach which, in turn, would enhance the quality of communication, allow to build relationships between a coach and participants, but as the same time this would not weaken the bonds established during direct training courses;
- To create simulation games illustrating the situations which carers/assistants of seniors could encounter in real life;
- To publish instructional videos (e.g. videos on the building of the relationship carer – senior, behaviours of carer in difficult situations, ways of activating seniors, etc.);
- Create some motivators for the participants of the training course;
- Diversify the page by publishing training materials enriched with images where possible (drawings, photos, videos, animation) and sound and voice where appropriate.

Certainly, thanks to the modernisations mentioned above the effectiveness of education would be increased.

The group of coaches from the Polish partner would be composed of persons who have direct contact with students in daily life. Development of a new type of impact on the students proved to be difficult to them. Not all of them were able to break the habits of direct communication and build effective patterns of remote communication; they had problems with working out authoritative systems of activation, motivation, checking and assessing the knowledge of the participants.

The trainers, like the coaches, were of the opinion that the platform may be used mainly as an auxiliary tool in the education of future carers/assistants of seniors. They believed that the platform is a good place for publishing information, notifications, and tasks. In the event an immediate assistance was needed, they avoided this form of communication by choosing the contact by phone or direct meeting. Posting own observations or dilemmas was often seen as intrusion on their privacy and a certain intimacy. They believed that they do not need to share the issues that they wanted to discuss with the trainer with other users. Also, in the situation of uncertainty they did not want to be accused of being undereducated or not being able to cope with the situation. They trusted their trainer and they could discuss various issues with him/her.

Repository, from where the participants downloaded the necessary materials, prepared by the coaches, was the most frequently used section of the platform. The few users who tried to involved others in discussion experienced disappointment and lack of interest on the part of other uses. They suspended

their activity on the platform mainly because, in their opinion, the introduction of contact with coaches and carers through the platform led to the formalisation of interpersonal relationships, followed even by the weakening of bonds established during direct meetings.

Interestingly, all of them use electronic mail and Skype, but in the case of the project they preferred to use their private channels (e-mails) than platform. At the same time they stressed that the platform is an excellent place for gathering ready-to-use, proven and reliable materials on the topics of their interest. Moreover, they liked the fact that the platform allows for a very rapid circulation of information. However, they also have several ideas how to improve the platform, e.g. that the titles should be replaced by colourful icons symbolising what the topic to which a given tab refers is.

Carers achieved both- in the Satisfaction Scale test and SUS test - the highest results. To them, the platform was modern and attractive ways of acquiring knowledge. They believed that the use of platform was not difficult, and the ready-to-use materials gathered in one place and possibilities of communicating with other carers and trainers through it is innovative and extremely interesting. They concluded that they are satisfied with the possibility of training through e-learning; they treated this type of knowledge acquisition as innovative, interesting, and not limiting in time and space. Among the disadvantages of the platform they identified the fact that specific requirements, which the students needed to fulfil in order to pass the course were lacking, which was demotivating; they focused on the work with seniors, rather than on using the platform.

In their opinion, in order to verify the knowledge some closed tasks teaching how to make decisions should be created. It would be useful that the verification of knowledge is performed in the form of a game or a form having elements characteristic of games: for example, tasks in the form of "fill out the gaps", "arrange in the correct order", or "combine elements", multiple-choice test, and preferably self-tests (tests for self-evaluation), exercising absorbing attention and stimulating their cognitive passions in the form of, for example, multimedia game, interactive crossword, true/false exercises, combining in pairs or sets of elements, arranging sentences in the correct order, etc. The evaluation of such tests should be done automatically so that the feedback on the results is as quick as possible. They were of the opinion that thanks to such solutions it would be easier to master, understand, and memorize new content. The form of the information published on the platform was boring and unattractive. They suggested posting image files that could function as mnemonics, instructional videos, animations, etc. Wiki, chat, forum (although they rarely used them) were considered by them as the most attractive elements of the platform. The international section was regarded as a window on the world, thanks to which they could learn the opinions of their counterparts in other countries on the tasks performed.

Conclusion

Within the framework of the “EduCare” project, all planned objectives have been fulfilled, even though it was a pilot project. One of them, treated as a priority, was to achieve “CHANGES” – changes in both the perception of aging and old age as well as in the understanding of elderly care. Moreover, a profile of new caregiver was created, and elderly care became an action and a process.

The project aimed to introduce changes in various fields; in somehow ontologically, axiologically, culturally and semantically different areas that constitute a coherent whole – a model training and vocational education for care providers – preparing a “new caregiver” for a “new senior”.

Taking the above-discussed goals, objectives and outcomes of the EduCare project into account, it is possible to try to evaluate the results achieved within the “CHANGES” formula. It comes down to four basic questions:

1. What has changed?
2. Who has changed?
3. What kind of change has occurred?
4. What’s next? – that is the question concerning recommendations for the future.

What has changed?

Training methods and forms.

The conducted research, vivid discussions among all the Partners and reflection based on the experience related to training of elderly caregivers showed several thematic areas of training and opened new fields of educational and didactic interactions in the form of strategies, methods, forms, and training tools. The recognised content areas are based on chosen aspects of: gerontology, anthropology, psychology and pedagogy, as well as on modern training tools. The Partners decided to include and develop also some innovative methods, the following of which deserve special attention: workshops, project work, coaching, e-learning (in the form of using a web platform). As it was mentioned above, the last two methods made the training more attractive, constituting at the same time very supportive forms of communication and cooperation between the beneficiaries: teachers, coaches/trainers, caregivers and seniors.

Who has changed?

Caregivers and seniors.

The new training methods enabled the trainers and the caregivers to achieve a high level of knowledge, skills and competences, which helped to change the institutional and instrumental care into a special, friendly and deep relation between a caregiver and a senior. The relation is built on the basis of needs of the elderly and the caregiver’s ability to diagnose them, as well as of individual work, communication and emotional bond built between the two persons. The foregoing entailed a change in the perception of both the caregivers and the actions taken by them “for the benefit of” and “with” seniors.

A caregiver is no longer a service provider, someone who takes care, provides some help, and does small chores, such as arranging formal and official matters. The person becomes a human – a companion of the elderly person, a partner, and an assistant, who performs the agreed tasks and, at the same time, builds a special kind of relationship that allows the senior to develop and establish new goals. Hence, the caregiver helps the senior to build a strong belief that, with proper support, the latter may put his or her plans into action. At the same time, it may give the caregiver a lot of pleasure and satisfaction. Consequently, seniors start to believe that they are not alone in their quest to live a dignified old age, that by accepting the interaction with a supportive caregiver they can reach their goals and that, thanks to their own initiative, they develop fuller and real relationships with other people. It all might compensate for disadvantages of the age. Finally, as a result, seniors understand and accept their old age.

The elderly are no longer recipients of various benefits and services, they become the subjects and the partners in building relationships and performing “joint” actions, which leads not only to the development of seniors, but also to the development of caregivers.

What kind of change has occurred?

The effect of the EduCare project is a transition from instrumentally conceived services to personal and responsible relationships. It was possible to achieve thanks to a change into the method of proceeding “with” and “in favour of” seniors, which was stimulated by coaching. The result consists in a far-reaching individualisation of elderly care in the form of one-to-one relation, which opened a broad perspective on the possibilities and accuracy of diagnosing the needs of seniors, common selection of tasks and goals, as well as making of the decision regarding the way in which they are to be fulfilled. The individualisation builds in seniors a sense of uniqueness, high value, a feeling of being in the centre, of confidence and trust. Furthermore, it provides a basis to build an authentic relationship of a friendly nature. This, in turn, improves both relations between seniors and caregivers and seniors’ ties with other social groups. And that leads to a multidimensional development of seniors and an improvement in the quality of life in the old age.

What’s next?

The EduCare project shows that, nowadays, it is a good idea to undertake actions focused on older people, as they are the most growing age group in Poland and Europe. Those actions should include widely understood activation, integration and development, as well as preparation for (semantically, axiologically and praxeologically) positive and successful aging. Seniors’ activation, within the EduCare project, leads to social integration and development of the elderly. It is possible to say that the EduCare project is a multi-partner project for the creation of circumstances and conditions for active, dignified and happy aging.

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