

European context

Chapter 4. Models

Poland¹

In Poland, part of lifelong learning is defined in the Act of education system as education in schools for adults, as well as getting and extension of general knowledge, skills and qualifications in the forms extracurricular activities (acquisition and replenishment of general knowledge, skills and qualifications vocational education institutions and centres of practical and training and professional development) by persons who have completed compulsory schooling.

Research shows that people in Poland retire several years earlier than it is statistically done in Europe. “The process of population aging is perceived by many as the most important long-term phenomenon of the 20th century in terms of economy and principles of social interaction” (Szukalski 2008). According to the data of the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS), the number of people aged 60-74 is to increase in the years 2008-2030 by 40 %, of those aged 75-84 by 65.6 %, of those aged 85+ by 90 %, and the number of people aged 100 will increase by 253 %. In 2010, 25 % of the elderly in Poland were aged 80+.

The aging of the society caused increased interest in the issue, development of the field of gerontology, including its specific fraction of pedagogical gerontology. Gerontology, supported by pedagogy, determines a more comprehensive perception of the issues, as it develops knowledge about the elderly, not only from medical perspective, but, furthermore, presents the possibility of full application of the achievements and output of pedagogy. With time, education and teaching transform into self-learning, self-improvement, self-education and self-accomplishment of people. As professor J. Homplewicz defines, pedagogical gerontology is “a pedagogy of needs and abilities of the elderly in the face of their reality, from which they depart. Pedagogical gerontology is the appeal of not only the 21st century, but also of the entire humanism, with which we are to reach also the elderly” (Homplewicz 2012).

The elderly are perceived nowadays, in the age of the “cult of youth”, as persons incapable of independent and meaningful life, alienated, treated with compassion and often socially discriminated against. B. Synak even claims that “never has the world been so allied against the older generation as it is now, and never has the social standing of an old person been so low” (Synak 2000).

However, achieving a status of a senior should not necessarily be associated with social degradation. One may prepare for the old age through modifying their view of oldness and quality of post-retirement life. Factors affecting the perception of the elderly life quality include, inter alia, diverse positive effects of late life learning. These include:

- maintaining good health, coping better with everyday challenges,
- accepting more responsibility for one’s own life,
- increased independence from others,
- better use of one’s own resources,
- development of reflectiveness (self-awareness),
- following the development of science and technology,
- expanding one’s knowledge of the modern world,
- learning one’s rights and appreciating one’s role in the society.

The conducted research shows also that 87 % of the surveyed undertake physical activity of varying intensity, while a mere 10 % declare engagement in intellectual activity, 36 % of those

¹Responsible for this part is Gertruda Wieczorek and the members of the research team of Jan Dlugosz University in Czestochowa

questioned declare being socially active, and only 4 % undertake all forms of activity (Gębska-Kuczerowska 2002).

Although it appears more difficult for the seniors to focus their attention, to learn the new things and remember new terms, it turns out that experience, previously gained knowledge and maturity are often helpful in drawing the correct conclusions (in particular, in situations where intuitive assessment plays an important role), making the right choices, making rational decisions, better planning, etc. It happens, unfortunately, all too seldom, that the intellectual potential and professional experience of the seniors are considered valued resources for employers, who, appreciating their qualities (including sense of responsibility and loyalty), employ them as mentors for the younger staff.

However, the elderly, most often, find it difficult to (re)enter the job market. Surveys show that as much as 29 % of people under the age 60 intend to undertake paid jobs after they reach retirement age, while, in reality, a mere 10 % of people do work after they reach the aforementioned age (this may be further broken down into 5 % of those working on a full-time basis, 3 % on a part-time basis, and 2 % performing casual work). This may be evidence of social withdrawal of the elderly (Wadołowska 2010).

Marginalization of the senior citizens in Poland is further reinforced by, inter alia, their low activity in terms of demanding their rights and privileges, limited access to information, being ignored by the media, no real interest in the problems of the elderly, attitudes towards oldness and a negative stereotype of the old age in Poland (Rejman 2012).

It is easy to explain to oneself the unwillingness to continue education or self-development. Discussion on the factors hindering the decision to participate in educational programs includes such elements as conviction of one's own social inferiority, fear of derision on the part of others, fear of the unknown, unwillingness to attend school or to learn, shortage of financial resources, physical and mental conditions, uncertainty surrounding of learning, objections on the part of the family, no conditions for education, inaccessibility of educational institutions or their not meeting the expectations of the elderly.

It is doubtless, however, that there are seniors who do wish to learn. There is a direct link between the level of education, having clearly defined interests, current activity we show at reaching the old age, and the willingness to continue education. The higher the level of the above-mentioned factors, the stronger the motivation to undertake further forms of education. Most often, such persons decide to continue education in its organized form when they realize that the knowledge they may acquire could help them in solving personal, social and professional issues, or that it may give satisfaction.

Motivations for older people to commence further education include, inter alia, wish to acquire new skills and information, as well as their improvement, preparation for work in a new position, productive use of spare time, wish to meet new, interesting people, achieving greater efficiency in performed duties, wish to change one's financial standing, expected social or professional promotion, personality development, improvement of interpersonal bonds, developing physical fitness, wish to adjust one's education with reference to the others, as well as attempt to increase one's self-esteem.

Spain

In Spain, education for senior learners has been essentially provided by three very different groups of institutions. Each of them implements educational programmes following different models.

Universities

Since 1991, almost all Spanish universities have created a programme targeted to senior citizens (over 55). The teachers are part of the university personnel, and the spaces (classrooms) are also on the same campus; in all cases, the senior programmes constitute an integral part of the university, equivalent to departments. The qualification of the staff working in those

departments is very high as they are specialised in different areas of seniors' education (gerontology, pedagogy, psychology, etc.)

There are slight differences in the way each university implements its programme. Most commonly, a formal structure of subjects is offered to all learners each academic year. These subjects are specifically designed and tailor-made for seniors. In a few cases, a completely different structure is offered where seniors can freely choose the subjects and attend courses together with younger students. Senior learners obtain a certificate and a diploma after they finish their studies, which is recognised by the university although it is not valid for official accreditation in a national or international level.

Universities also frequently include extracurricular activities that enable seniors to continue learning more informally, although this has never been the main objective of this kind of institution.

Because of the formality of the universities, the senior university programmes as a whole, and the subjects and activities in particular, are designed following strict rules to ensure the pedagogy is adequate for seniors' and social needs, to guarantee effectiveness and efficiency, and to include quality evaluation. These programmes are also used as laboratories by research groups for testing and innovating.

The subjects and activities offered in the senior universities mainly come from the humanities, but a wide spectrum of subjects can be found, depending on the faculties and schools in each university.

At present, 43 universities with a senior educational programme are linked through a national network called AEPUM (<http://www.aepumayores.org/>) and are supported by the Ministry of Education and the National Social Services Institute.

Associations

Institutions offering specifically designed activities for the elderly are also common. They do not have an education programme, but they create environments for informal learning where seniors do activities they enjoy: dancing, chess, theatre, some kind of handcrafts, or physical exercise. These kinds of activities are offered by a wide variety of institutions: adult associations, retirement homes, town councils or cultural associations. Of particular note are the "Third age classrooms" (Aulas de la tercera edad),

Centres for Adult Education

In the official Spanish education framework, adult education centres offer a second chance for anybody interested in continuing to learn any specific subject such as languages, ICT, professional training, etc. Although these courses are mainly job-oriented, they are open to all ages, although they do not usually offer specific courses for the elderly.

Italy

The first Italian UTA was initiated by A. Campra Giuseppe psychologist in Turin in 1975. In the late 80's in Italy there were already more than 70 institutions affiliated with the National Association of Universities of the Third Age (UNITRE). Italian universities assume the realization of French UTA model mainly trying to activate students intellectually and culturally. Students of Italian UTA pay dues, and the only criterion for membership is reaching the age of 30 years. Universities affiliated in UNITRE are marked out by two categories of students: so-called free students not obliged to participate in the classes and the real audience that might receive a diploma of course completion at the end of the year (if they have at least 90 % attendance). UNITRE is supported by the volunteer activities of its members

Besides the affiliated universities in UNITRE in Italy there operate not affiliated universities, considerably internally varied in terms of structure and form of classes. They offer their

students the classes in form of lectures, going to the cinema and theater, exercises, they conduct research with students participation, promote the intergenerational integration².

In Italy the older people are surrounded by special care from the state authorities. Educational institutions organize educational projects for this group of people. Their main objectives of the Italian education program for adults are: local community development, promotion of individual and intellectual development. Especially important is affiliate and integrative function as well as intergenerational integration. Therefore Italian UTAs focus relatively young people, at the age over 30 years, and the persons aged 60 years and over represent only 40 % of students (Czerniawska 1996).

Finland

In Finland, the first University of the Third Age (UTA) was founded in 1985 in Jyväskylä, and six months later a similar programme was launched at the University of Helsinki. At present, Finnish-language teaching is provided by nine universities under the name of the University of the Third Age. The Åbo Akademi University coordinates university-level education for Swedish-speaking elderly people in Finland. The Activities of the UTA are coordinated nationwide by a national advisory board.

The University of the Third Age provides the elderly with current research-based information and offers opportunities for self-directed non-degree studies. The University of the Third Age is open to all elderly people regardless of their previous education, professional backgrounds or independent studies. Studying has no lower or upper age limit.

The activities of the University of the Third Age include multidisciplinary lecture series, seminars, courses, IT teaching, distance teaching, online teaching, research, publishing, study groups and study-related travel. Activities are based on lifelong learning, academic teaching and opportunities to participate in planning. Teaching is also provided in cooperation with summer universities, adult education centres and other partners in altogether about 70 Finnish localities, and also in some countries outside Finland. During recent years, the University of the Third Age has had about 17 000 students a year, and the number of participants is constantly increasing. Among the students, some 75 % are women. The age and the educational background of the participants show a great variation, although most of them belong to the younger age group.

In **Sweden**, the first UTA was founded in 1979 in Uppsala.

Denmark has a long tradition of adults education, including also the special education of elderly at the universities. Danish UTAs are mainly associated with universities, but managed and run by volunteers, they belong to the institutions known as folk universities.

Also in **Norway** the UTAs work: in 1989 there was formed a council coordinating their activities the National Advisory Committee, which announced that UTAs are the part of the university. In 1991 the Ministry of Education acknowledged that these institutions belong to the open universities system (www.worldu3a.org).

Bulgaria

In comparison with many other EU countries there is no established University of Third Age (UTA) type format in Bulgaria. Nevertheless there has been a trend for increasing the interest of seniors in attending formal educational institutions. To a great extent this is due to the established contacts with UTA in other European countries, but, still, when it comes to the 50+ age group the focus remains on adult (including VET) and not on senior education.

Various public and private educational institutions, community centres and NGOs, all outside the third sector, have developed non-formal and informal learning programmes, which are becoming more and more popular among seniors. Recent developments aim to introduce more flexible forms of learning (including e-learning, extra-mural learning, part-time learning, short courses, etc.) in the non-formal and informal learning though they are not officially recognized

² Italia-Universita della Terza Eta: www.worldu3a.org/worldu3as/uta-italia.htm

by most institutions of secondary education level and universities as validated competences and skills.

The changes introduced and the supplements in the Higher Education Act now establish a legislative base for the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes, which is seen as a prerequisite for improving senior education provision and quality, and validation of skills and competences acquired, and in general, for promoting lifelong learning. As stated in the 2007 Inventory Report it contributes to the achievement and "...compliance with the common European principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Yet practical implementation of this requires further action on the development of methodical documentation and handbooks to be carried out, corresponding legal entities to be defined, and for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning to be publicized among the potential users..." (Nikolova 2010, p.9)

Latvia

According to the results of adults (25 - 64 years old) education survey, 84% of population participated in the non-formal education, as it was associated with their work. This trend indicates that the main attention in education in Latvia is paid to improvement of job skills and competencies. It is not interesting for seniors who have taken retirement. There is still no governmental program for ensuring seniors' non-formal education in Latvia. In other EU countries it is done by supporting University of Third Age. Seniors' non-formal and informal education is generally ensured by such municipal institutions as retirees' day centres, social security institutions, collectives of creative expression (dance, choirs, handicrafts) supported by local governments. There are municipal social service support centres in Latvia that give people free social services and leisure activities. The aim is to improve people's quality of life. Day care centre provides social care and social rehabilitation services, development of social skills and education for persons who have reached the age of receiving pension. The main task of the social service is to render social assistance services, promoting self-help and persons' involvement in public life, as well as contributing to their sense of responsibility to themselves and their families. Social services include social care that aims to ensure stable quality of life to a person, who cannot do it by himself/herself because of the age or functional disorder, and social rehabilitation that aims to prevent or reduce invalidity, disability, dependency and social consequences in person's life, caused by other factors. This indicates that seniors' education activities are primarily implemented as social support events.

Great contribution to informal senior education is provided by non-governmental organizations. Latvian Pensioners' Federation is founded as an organization unifying senior's interests. It brings together 138 local organizations. It is a non-political, non-governmental organization that represents seniors' interests in a governmental level, as well as implements a variety of projects, including the educational ones. Seniors' associations are established in almost every city and region. These associations raise funds from local governments, European projects and private financing and implement different types of educational activities.

Hungary

Conceivably also as a result of the successful year of Active Ageing 2012, in Hungary there are more and more initiatives for providing diverse senior education and cultural programs; though the focus is still on adult education in order to protect or offer jobs for people aged 45+. Based on the model of western-European countries, in September 2012 a Third Age University (under the direction of Eötvös Loránd University) in Hungary officially opened its gates for elderly people who would like to continue or widen their knowledge through the lectures offered by the Faculty of Science, Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology and Faculty of Arts.

Besides, so far the senior education providers in Hungary have been mainly community centres, local governments, NGO Associations, Private or public institutions and Clubs for elderly. The majority of the offered and more popular course types are non-formal and informal courses

which are more flexible in time and students are in closer relation with the teachers. Unfortunately the participation rate on these courses is still quite low and really concentrated to the capital. Another restraining factor that many seniors in Hungary struggle with financial problems, so in their case “self-realization” certainly takes a back seat.

About the validation of formal and informal learning in Hungary, based on a recent report³, we found the following conclusion: “In summary there is no nationwide validation system based on uniform principles and procedures; however, several isolated validation procedures have been in use for a long time. At present major development projects are being implemented in the framework of the New Hungary Development Plan although very few of these go beyond the boundaries of the various training sectors. Hungary is also characterised by simultaneous and somewhat congested development of several preconditions that would be important for a validation system.”

Germany

German UTA mostly are connected to the universities. The curriculum are developed by university professors and the teaching methods are tailored to the specific needs of the elderly. In Germany there are three types of facilities for seniors. They serve an educational and integrative function. Such an institutions include the popular universities, training centres, academies for seniors and higher educational schools open for all age groups.

In **Switzerland** the first UTA was founded in Geneva by initiative of the doctor - prof. Geinsendorf In the French-speaking part of the country there operate the UTAs, and in the German-speaking part the universities for seniors. The latter had to exist in frame of high school, which developed the form and content of education, and its task was to familiarize the students with specific areas of knowledge. Students could continue their education at the folk university, as well as the regular university studies. In turn in UTAs did not apply the rules regarding the age limits. The classes were conducted in form of courses and seminars, as also, basing on the French UTA model, there were carried out the various research with the students participation.

Senior education in **Austria** is neither based on French UTA model, nor on the British model. At the end of the 70s there facilitated the seniors to take the studies usually as a free audience. Also the seniors without secondary school certificate could start the studies. The women over 40 years old and the man over 45 years old were determined as studying seniors. UTA in Austria is actually the association of senior students studying at regular universities. These associations are fighting for the rights of senior students (Halicki 2000).

The academic model of senior education was created in the **Netherlands** in the 80s. Higher Education for the Elderly (Hogar Onderwijs Voor Oudern), is a model of general academic education of seniors. The institutions included in the HOVO have different names. The first facility was established at the University of Groningen by CJ Tempelman initiative in 1986. In the years 1986 - 1989 there were organized at nine universities the educational facilities for elderly. In 1994, there were 21, and in 2002 already 25. Most of them were organized at universities, however, a noticeable trend are the universities based on the British model of self-help e.g. in Roosendaal. Dutch universities implement the rigorous of academic education standard. In many universities there are realized the special education programs for seniors that provide a degree in the specific area of the particular area of knowledge. However, there is increasingly discussed, if these academic educational programs should be more liberal, and the program range expanded and adapted to the wider seniors multitude needs (Halicki 2000).

³ <http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77461.pdf>

This text is part of the book “Education and quality of life of senior citizens”. See the full book in <http://www.edusenior.eu>

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