SPECIFICITY OF LEARNING IN OLD AGE AS FULFILLMENT OF DREAMS AND CARING ABOUT HEALTH: IN POLAND AND ABROAD

Keywords: activity of the elderly, dreams of seniors, caring about health, intellectual development.

Abstract: The author presents the way of life of active elderly people and undertakes a general assessment of the level of support for seniors both in Poland and abroad. She describes seniors as people who fulfill their dreams and feel the need to take care of their own health. Both Poland and other countries are trying to support the development of this layer of society. Senior clubs, dance schools and language schools enable intellectual development at all ages. The author pays special attention to the language and dance act model depending on the needs of seniors. The need for education in the field of foreign languages results mainly from civilization and communication aspects. Dance classes result from the need to take care of your own body, better mental and physical well-being. The author wrote an article to present the way of life of active seniors in Poland and abroad. In the article she presented two forms of activity – dance and learning foreign languages. Each of these activities, both physical and mental, is very important in the life of seniors.

Introduction

The purpose of the article is to compare the educational offer for seniors in Poland and abroad. Among the various forms of gerontological education implemented in senior clubs, U3A and other facilities (learning in old age\(^1\) (Szarota, 2015), dance and language classes were selected for analysis. Assumptions of the theory of activity (see Halicki, 2006)\(^2\) show that seniors, in order to maintain their own emotional balance, mental and physical well-being, should take on new roles and fulfill themselves in new areas of activity. Conception life-long learning,
actually late life-long learning also includes elderly people. The benefits of educational involvement are indisputable.

**Senior’s clubs**

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

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

Senior clubs in Poland are self-help centers of social, cultural, educational and caring life. The purpose of senior clubs is to improve the quality of life of older and lonely people through their integration with the local environment (Posluszna, 2012). The first stage in the educational process of seniors is motivation. It is this that influences the fact that seniors meet with their instructors, e.g. in the computer room and start learning together. The theory of motivation is based on the
assumption that human predictions related to education are related to his previous educational experience (Jurczyk-Romanowska, 2012).

Senior clubs play not only the role of social activation but also the concept of cultural participation and socio-cultural animation. Senior clubs through their activities influence the change of personality and behavior of older people, allowing them to find a satisfactory model of life in old age. The basic elements of such an old age model can be activity, creativity, and prosociality. This is a place where seniors can pursue their interests, develop hobbies, feel comfortable in a circle of matters and people they know and understand. Their main task is to keep older people in a state of activity, and thus self-sufficiency and independence in life for the longest possible life in a natural environment for them (Chabior, 2011).

The Polish phenomenon are undoubtedly Universities of the Third Age. Their mission is to activate seniors, among others, by educating, learning, expanding knowledge and developing the interests of listeners, as well as organizing active leisure time and enabling meeting new people. In 2018, 640 Universities of the Third Age operated in the form of various organizations and institutions in Poland. The total number of U3A students in the 2017/2018 academic year was 113.2 thousand, of which 86.3% are people aged 61 and more. The most numerous groups of participants were made up of younger seniors (61–75 years), whose participation in the analyzed period amounted to 70.3% of the total audience, and people aged 76 and more accounted for 16.0%. The largest number of seniors aged 61 and above took part in activities in the Podlasie and Lubusz Voivodships (Wyszkowska & Gabińska & Romańska, 2020).

The Role and Function of Lunch Clubs for Older People in the former County of Gwent

Lunch clubs were created as a result of a joint initiative of scientists in Torfaen. Clubs that have a positive impact on the quality of life of older people who are lonely and socially isolated. Unlike other training centers for older people, costing lunch clubs require little. The main goals of lunch clubs are supporting older people in maintaining independence and staying in their own homes and communities. These are not only the goals of lunch clubs, but also the two most important imperatives in Welsh' social policy. In addition, the support provided by the New Chances Fund has given the opportunity to discover lunch clubs more thoroughly. A lunch club can have many functions. One of them is the membership service of food services, which usually consists of meals served one to five days a week for a symbolic price. However, in addition to nutrition issues, lunch clubs also offer other activities. Lunch clubs in Wales for the integrated development of social contacts. They help to achieve independence, depression services, lead a satisfying and satisfying life, and thus improve the quality of life. Clubs' functions focus not only on making friends, but also on other active personal and
situational factors that also contribute to creating loneliness of people. In addition, for people who are still needed, a trust or situation should be developed in which it is too difficult to be with more people. Such a difficult situation and psychological problems are associated with their long isolation. Formal social services are often unacceptable because they reinforce the feeling of being a burden. The social environment, i.e. the social context and physical environment, has a stronger and more effective impact on the experience of old age than genetic and biological factors. A community level action plan has been developed to combat the negative experience of loneliness and social isolation in old age. However, the adequacy and availability of most interventions to alleviate social isolation and loneliness among older people remains unclear. The county tries to improve the quality of life of older people by improving the quality of individual and social customer networks. Creating lunch clubs gives older people the opportunity to go outside, meet with others, and make new friends. It’s a very interesting that many lunch clubs feature activities which either precede or follow the meal itself which can have a health or educational emphasis (knowledge about dancing or fire safety) as well as being stimulating and meaningful. Older people make new friends and improve existing friendships through structured programmes of social and educational activities (Wallace & Wiggin, 2007).

**Dance classes for seniors**

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

In recent years, dance has become one of the most popular forms of physical activity in Poland. Due to the widely propagated fashion for dancing, an increasing number of people enroll in all dance courses. Every year there are more and more dance schools presenting a very diverse offer. Abilities or skills are also irrelevant, because classes are organized in many levels of advancement, which allows to find classes that will give satisfaction and joy, and will also meet expectations. Participation in dance classes helps an individual adapt more easily to changes – increased activity and effort as well as new conditions. By dancing, senior can compensate deficiencies and unmet needs, and support and stimulate human psychophysical development (Banio & Banio-Surmiak, 2017) The effect of great interest in dance in our country is the dynamically developing dance clubs.
and interest circles at the Universities of the Third Age or Senior Clubs coming out with an offer of movement and dance classes. Dance is a great fun proposition, it gives you entertainment, allows you to escape from everyday problems, greatly improves your mood and relaxes you mentally. At the Universities of the Third Age dance classes are conducted which use therapeutic knowledge based on the principles of kinesitherapy, music therapy, and choreotherapy (Śliwińska, 2014). Dance is one of the most desirable physical activities among seniors. Dance with all its range of types and styles and a variety of pace becomes one of the most pleasant forms of stimulating the work of the human body (Kott, 2017). Group dancing brings satisfaction when you manage to master new systems. This requires increased concentration and memory exercise. You can dance them in any group, regardless of the number of men who are necessary in traditional dances. They often use traditional folk tunes and forms of group dance (Zaorska, 1997). Australian research\(^3\) shows that social interaction is the motivation for attending ballet classes for the elderly. Motivation is a key factor motivating active older people to participate in and enjoy ballet. Participation in ballet classes positively on the body of the elderly. They feel more energetic, lively, keeping fit, body control, awareness, posture, flexibility, physical well-being, and general well-being. When ballet classes for seniors began to be organized, it turned out that in some incentive motivations for activity in the classes resulting from previous ballet experiences of women. Ballet participants for seniors openly admitted that now they would have time to fulfill their dreams. Further incentive criteria are present in the group who contribute to the inspiration of participating in ballet. People participating in the classes interact with people. They often go to coffee together after classes and organize social gatherings. An important issue of ballet exercises is also a matter of exercise exercises for seniors. Exercises must be set at a level so that they are not too difficult and do not demotivate the class. When it comes to experienced social ballet participants, they feel that they are feeling community and building relationships (Ali-Haapala & Moyle & Kerr, 2018). According to the theory of activity\(^4\) that are still valid more active older people are more satisfied with their lives. In order to maintain a positive self-image, older people must replace with new roles those who lost along with the aging process. In this way, well-being in old age is the result of increasing activity in newly acquired roles (Halicki, 2006). During the joint dance, a bond is established between mutual participants of ballet classes. It is worth noting that the participants of dance classes exchange comments with the participation of them refer to ballet movements. In classes for seniors, there is a culture of mutual assistance in obtaining movements and sequences. The ballet

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\(^4\) See: J. Halicki (2004). Społeczne teorie starzenia się. In: M. Halicka, J. Halicki (Eds.), Zostawić ślad na ziemi...
hall serves seniors not only to work on their own body and development, but also is a meeting place, and then a weekly contact point supporting social engagement. Unlike classes for young people, there is no phenomenon of competition, judgments, feelings of feeling worse or better than others in seniors’ classes. In groups of senior members, the participants help each other and get accepted, help and receive help. Participation in ballet classes is undoubtedly a very pleasant activity for active seniors. Ballet love, joy, a sense of achievement and happiness are common emotional experiences that are involved in attributing ballet (Ali-Haapala & Moyle & Kerr, 2018). Dance has a positive effect on both the physical, mental and social levels. The physical activity of the individual increases. As a result, the level of general physical fitness also increases, visual-motor coordination and functioning of the systems, mainly motor, circulatory, respiratory, nervous and metabolism, are improved (Pluta & Krzykała & Andrzejewski, 2018). Słowińska (Słowińska, 2019) draws attention to the fact that the field in which seniors are involved is often of secondary importance to them. Not because of the interest in a certain area of culture and the need for implementation within it, these people join in cultural activity. The choice of the field of participation is dictated by the relational nature of the classes, in other words, seniors reach for such a form and a field that provides direct, close interpersonal contacts. Cultural activity with this approach has no autotelic value, seniors do not engage in it for itself, but because it enables them to maintain social contacts, it becomes an antidote to social isolation (Słowińska, 2019).

**Languages classes for the elderly**

The place and form of learning foreign language classes for seniors is determined not only by their psychophysical abilities, funds, lifestyle, or access to broadly understood infrastructure ensuring the possibility of participating in a language course, but also by specific experiences, needs and interests. In smaller institutions specializing in language training of seniors, the most commonly taught are modern lingua franca – English – as well as German, French, Italian and increasingly Russian and Spanish. However, it is in large Universities of the Third Age, associating several hundred and more members – these operate mainly in large agglomerations – seniors have the opportunity to learn less popular languages, even those which in Polish are considered exotic, such as Japanese, Chinese or Esperanto. Among Polish seniors, some people are willing to learn about cultures and languages from distant corners of the world. If one of the languages of interest is not in the program offer of the nearest UTW, senior club or even a commercial language school, then this gap is filled with sources and multimedia courses to which an increasing group of seniors has access every year. Among the preferred activities that seniors undertake while learning foreign languages is active participation in discussions, asking / explaining problems, independent work, e.g. when solving written tasks,
working in pairs or larger groups, participating in projects requiring activity and creativity. It is also worth considering active activities in which seniors take part in language courses in Poland. These include activities such as joint trips abroad organized as part of a language course, reading texts and then solving, exercises for these texts, written grammar exercises, repetition of converted material, physical education, e.g. in dance, using the recorder, and then listening recorded material and thus preserving it (Jaroszewska, 2013).

Stolarczyk-Zielonka (2010) draws attention to the fact that old age is characterized by some changes taking place in various spheres of human life, which in turn leads to linguistic and communicative changes. Determining specific dependencies can be helpful in maintaining language skills by old people. It should also be added that the output of linguists regarding the discussed issue is extremely modest. All information on aging comes from psychological, biological or sociological sources. Only based on them are a few linguistic conclusions. It is worth paying attention to the biological, psychological and social aspects of aging and their impact on language and communication skills. Language communication is one of the most important aspects of how people function in society. It consists of some skills, including intellectual (speaking, understanding, or cheap, etc.), whose mastery and high level of qualification guarantee the effectiveness of communication events occurring between people (Stolarczyk-Zielonka, 2010). The factor that is undoubtedly associated with old age is the deteriorating state of the senses, such as eyesight, hearing, and decreasing motor skills of the body. The information delivered to the brain through these senses is no longer as consistent, less detailed, and takes more time to provide than young people. “A clear defect in the process of perception is due to the fact that the old mind is less fluent in merging the sorption information into one coherent whole” (Stuart-Hamilton 2000, p. 34). With age, the weight of the brain also decreases, which means that the number of nerve cells responsible for learning efficiency and speed decreases. Some older people, therefore, absorb new knowledge more slowly, remember more slowly, and have weaker adaptability. Age also significantly affects memory, which is an essential factor in mental functioning (Stuart-Hamilton, 2000). Thanks to efficiently working memory systems, it is possible to learn new things, recall and reproduce information learned earlier. As memory in people over the age of sixty tends to deteriorate, the consequence of this fact may be a gradual decrease in intellectual skills, including language and communication skills. Research on memory processes in old age shows that direct memory, i.e. the one that is responsible for recalling content in the field of attention, reduces its capabilities. On the other hand, the indirect memory indicates that elderly people have problems with referring to content, things, events that have ceased to be the object of their reflection. Without much difficulty, they use knowledge and experience to which they return with their thoughts (Zych, 1999). In old age, other difficulties are also observed at the language level. These include speech disorders caused by various factors, for example,
hearing problems, but also changes in the brain. Speech organs are controlled by some of its spheres, damage to any of them as a result of illness or other event causes difficulties in the process of speaking. Speech disorders may be the result of brain aphasia (Maruszewski, 1970). One of the Russian scholars, Luria, who was observing people with aphasia, noted that the disease was caused by damage to the phonemic hearing responsible for all speech activities. Another reason for the communication problems of the elderly may be the so-called auditory-verbal memory, thanks to which it is possible to remember words and their sound, as well as is necessary when interpreting spoken speech. In the case of aphasic disorders, also internal speech conditioning the production of speech does not fulfill its functions (Stolarczyk-Zielonka, 2010). In the case of pedagogical considerations should be distinguished gerontological education and geragogy. Gerontological education disseminates knowledge about old age, using various educational environments, organizational forms, methods and means of didactic communication in this process. Geragogy is the pedagogy of aging and old people. It is a study of the conditions and effects of educational and educational activities that accompany the aging process and old age. It conducts research on the extension and optimization of the active life conditions of people in post-working age (Szarota, 2015). Paying attention to the basics of gerontological education, it should be taken into account that the program for training seniors covered medical, socio-cultural and social issues. They were supposed to contribute to the development of old people, but above all to equip them with the ability to adapt to life in modern society. From the point of view of general old age models, modernist education of seniors is best described by a deficit and conservative old age model. The essence of the former is the theory of limited use, which assumes that the body's functions diminish with age. However, they can be kept in shape by exercising and training to delay deterioration processes. Conservative old age model, however, emphasizes the importance of individual activity, allowing you to enjoy physical and mental health for longer (Muszyński, 2016). We can distinguish three possibilities of foreign language education. Firstly, at the level of formal education – this may include learning foreign languages at primary school, high schools and colleges; as a result, an appropriate level of formal education targeted at a given foreign language is obtained (this possibility is more specific for children, young people, and adults of working age). At the level of non-formal education, i.e. learning foreign languages at language schools or as part of educational language programs/activities at third-century universities, third-century academies, day centers, and retirees' clubs. At the level of informal education – this is the most accessible, spontaneous and non-institutional education in foreign languages, e.g. through communication in communities, watching TV programs or listening to radio programs in a foreign language, reading books, materials or tourist guides, etc. (Švec, 2008).

Older people learn to be self-sufficient in undertaking subsequent tasks resulting from personality development. According to E. Skibińska (Skibińska,
Specificity of learning in old age as fulfillment ...

2008), global goals of senior education are “understanding the world combined with the ability to interpret it”, “shaping the attitude of responsibility for oneself and one's future”, as well as acquiring “the ability to solve everyday problems” (Skibińska, 2008, p. 100). Given the specifics of learning in old age, and therefore mainly through non-formal education, its characteristics and purpose can be defined in words Olga Czerniawska: “Educational aspects of quality of life consist in accepting the reinterpretation of one's own experiences, one's past, searching for forgotten or undervalued values in it, reliving them for self-development, for a better life in the present, for accepting one's change through maturing to today, until tomorrow, by constantly designing your life, seeing future perspectives, even if this perspective is for tomorrow, week, month” (Czerniawska, 2000, p. 178).

According to the theory of activity, to survive old age, seniors must take care of their activity, also on the level of learning. So that it would give them satisfaction, and at the same time, that the community would accept these activities and be able to use this activity in part. Education is not only the goal of activity but also a tool for acquiring new competencies that allow development and action. One can propose an education model as a tool for self-determination and self-sufficiency in old age based mainly on its three basic functions: emancipatory, altruistic and egotic (Fabiś, 2005). The emancipation function aims to strengthen the whole generation. Education not only maintains the position and place of seniors in all environments, which constantly develops, freeing oneself from dependencies, oppressive conditions, stereotypes, superstitions, up to raising the generation of seniors in the social hierarchy, independence – both on an individual scale and in relation to the whole population. Education understood in this way will be utilized through participation in social life through participation in decision-making bodies, to create for seniors – as a generation, an important place in the social structure, to care for the interests of the oldest citizens. The second function – altruistic – helps to realize the need to support another. Learning allows you to understand others and equips you with the necessary knowledge and skills to act for the benefit of others. By opening up to others and engaging in the surrounding world, by working for others and by learning for others and from them, seniors can find themselves in the role of volunteers, carers or local politicians, animators in the local environment of members of charity teams. The third direction of learning allows you to realize the needs related to your development, are selfish learning, aimed at yourself, leading to self-realization, to self-realization, to fulfill your ambitions, dreams, aspirations, and aspirations. Thanks to learning, a mature man not only broadens his interests or develops himself, but he also becomes more perfect in the spiritual space. He can face existential concerns, problems of everyday life in old age, and it is also easier for him to prepare for death. In a life marked by a lot of free time, it becomes an alternative to boredom and underdeveloped activities. Regardless of the level of education and educational biography in old age, everyone can find suitable educational activities for themselves. For people supporting old people, this is an
important task: finding areas of educational activity that are appropriate for the individual. Certainly, the university of the third age will be an excellent offer for educated people looking for contacts with others, for open people, social people willing to learn and discuss to other leisure activities, such as sport, tourism, art, but also learning similar to traditional learning at school. Universities for seniors are becoming the meeting place of the local elite, the most emancipated part of seniors (Chabior & Fabiś & Wawrzyniak, 2014).

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

**Programs abroad supporting the knowledge of foreign languages of the elderly**

The topic of the need for education of the elderly has intensively developed due to the aging of the population. In order to learn foreign languages, many different supporting and opinion forming documents were created, as well as binding documents, programs and regulations. Many of these programs and documents were created on the basis of international agreements. The first example of a program can be “The National Program for the Protection of Elderly People”. This program paid particular attention to third-century universities to preserve and develop spiritual health and to facilitate aging. In educational programs that take into account the principles of restoring language education to the elderly. The second program “Memorandum on Lifelong Education” focuses on new basic skills for all. They are the skills which are necessary for an active participation in the life of knowledge-based society and economy. Program Memorandum includes command of foreign languages to the skills as well. Another issue raised in foreign languages for seniors abroad is the teaching staff. Considering the qualifications of foreign language teachers, many times the courses were conducted by primary and secondary school teachers who used the methodology of working with children also when working with seniors, which was counterproductive. As a participant in lifelong learning in the field of foreign languages, the senior enters the educational process with certain expectations, especially educational needs that can be adequately saturated with the knowledge of a foreign language. The purpose of using different foreign languages is to need independence from other people communicating in a foreign language, family members, friends or acquaintances to prove to others, usually younger, that he / she is also able to develop, despite their old age (Határ & Grofčíková, 2016).
Learning English language the elderly people abroad

In order to meet the needs of social and cultural activities, many institutions have created projects offering a range of activities for the elderly. Among these activities, you can often choose different types of activities, from handicrafts to singing, instructional games and languages such as English. Choosing the right methodology for working with the elderly significantly affects the learning process of this social group. For this reason, it is necessary to find effective solutions and actions that would help seniors to learn English. When looking for the best English language strategy for adults, you should consider aspects such as decreased performance speed, reduced memory processing resources, and age-related inhibition and control of cognitive control. From a medical point of view, with age, neurons are naturally lost, which can cause loss of cognitive functions, such as memory. Episodes of memory failure may also indicate mild cognitive impairment or dementia such as Alzheimer's disease (Garcia, 2017).

Summary

Taking into account the process of learning, and thus fulfilling their dreams and caring for older people, it is worth noting that in many countries work is being done to improve their quality of life. In Poland, compared to other countries, it is extremely important that the classes, e.g. in dance and foreign languages, are adapted to the needs of the elderly. Seniors, despite their age, have many educational opportunities in Poland, but also abroad. Thanks to this, they can develop, fulfill their dreams and at the same time take care of their health. In addition to the educational sphere in Poland, it also cares for the emotional and emotional sphere of older people. Thanks to this, they do not feel lonely and have a greater sense of belonging to society. While some of the memory changes are preserved, which can be used with normal if they are not associated with progressive decline or impairment. In addition to available cognitive seniors also have emotional problems. These include self-esteem, anxiety, stress and depression. They can significantly affect the behavior of elderly students. Both Poland and other countries give seniors many opportunities for educational development and acquiring knowledge in dance and learning foreign languages.

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SPECYFIKA UCZENIA SIĘ W STAROŚCI JAKO SPEŁNIENIE MARZEŃ
I DBANIE O ZDROWIE: W POLSCE I ZA GRANICĄ

Słowa kluczowe: aktywność osób starszych, marzenia seniorów, dbanie o zdrowie, rozwój intelektualny.


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