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## GRAYING SOCIETY IN UKRAINE: TIME FOR OLDER ADULTS TO GO TO UNIVERSITY

*The article provides evidence that it is worthwhile to reconsider the traditional approach to older adults needs. The growing age group of older people needs to be ensured the adaptation to rapid economic and social change. The state policy needs rethinking in the approaches to human potential, recognizing seniors as a valuable part of social and even economic resources, as this cohort is going to win a significant place in demographical and social structure. It is important to provide the opportunity for older adults to be active participants of country development process, including education and labor market. Encouraging people of the third age (older adults) to educational activity may be an effective resource for social, economic and intellectual growth of the country and this idea should become one of the strategic directions of the state policy.*

**Key words:** ageing of the population, demographic shift, older adults, older adult education, the third age.

**Statement of the problem.** Scientific-and-technological progress and socio-economic growth in more developed countries have led to the significant changes in demographic process. These days there is no ignoring a demographic shift or in a long-range social and economic planning as it can complicate substantially the solving of many problems the society will face in the future. People are creatively designing their lives in the late phase of their lives and moving in new direction with personal growth and renewal. In present days, the growing age group of older adults needs to be ensured the adaptation to rapid economic and social changes. For every country, it is important to contribute to overcoming the problems of loneliness and social isolation of older adults as well as to encourage them to further education in order to become an active segment of the society.

According to a variety of research and the statistic data, demographic revolution has been occurring worldwide. The society meets the shift from a demographic regime of high fertility and relatively low mortality to a regime of low fertility and low mortality, especially in developed regions, which results in slow growing population and its aging. Many appreciable investigations on demographic changes prove the 21st century to be a turning point in the structure of the world population and the prognosis show that elderly cohort is increasing dramatically.

People are tending to live longer and more active lives than ever before. Thus, the older adults should be brought to the active fraction of human capital. In such challenging situation, the conception of lifelong learning is becoming one of the most significant factors of the development of society. As education is regarded to be a significant factor of the development of human potential and social progress, encouraging older adults to learning activity should become one of the strategic directions of the state policy.

The **purpose of the article** is to prove the need for older adult education as indispensable component of active and successful life in older age.

Educational gerontology as the area of research study has been developed in the works of European and American researchers. In particular,

- the conceptual principles of education of older adults have been substantiated in the researches of W. Bachmann, O. Bollnov, F. Williamson, C. James, F. Kehrer, P. Laslett, A. Lemieux, H. McClusky, M. Mann, G. Mieskes, K. Percy, D. Peterson, W. Sadler, R. Swindell, A. Zych;

- psychological foundation of education in the third age (older adults) has been analysed by W. Withnal, D. Garvin, E. Erikson, J. Carter, D. Katz, J. Kohen, E. Miles, B. Marshall, E. Schneider;

- the models of gerontological education and the approach to education of older adults have been studied in the researches of P. Baltes, C. Handy, A. Heller, F. Clark, C. Rafman, M. Seaman, M. Farnosa;

- the problems of organizing and running of universities for people of the third age have been illustrated by J. Cowdel, D. Martin, J. Thompson, T. Townsend, R. Swindell, and others.

Population ageing means the increase in the number and proportion of older people in society. It has three possible causes: migration, longer life expectancy and decrease in birth rate. It is necessary to note that most commonly accepted measure of population ageing is by evaluation of the percentage of people aged 60 and over in the total population structure [15].

There is no universal definition of when old age starts but the UNO (United Nations Organization) has agreed and it is generally accepted that 60+ may be identified as a guide for working definition of old age [3]. However, the WHO (World Health Organization) considers 50 as the beginning of old age. At the same time, WHO recognizes that when it comes to defining old age it is very important to take into consideration not only the age (years) a person has reached, but a social aspect as well – loss of previous roles and attainment of the new ones, ability or inability to make active contribution to society.

The analysis of the demographic forecast to 2050 shows that the percentage of the world's population aged 60 years

and over is expected to be about 21% – at the level of Europe presently; the percentage of the people aged 65+ will rise to 16% of the total population. The ratio of older people in developed regions is expected to grow to 31.2% which makes almost the third of the population; for Europe the ratio of the elderly aged 60 and over is predicted to reach 32.8% which means one in three persons will be over 60 years old [2]. In some developed countries and the countries with economies in transition, the number of older persons already exceeds the number of children and birth rate have fallen below replacement level. As the tempo of ageing in developing countries is more rapid than in developed countries, developing countries will have less time than the developed countries to adapt to this demographic shift.

Research on demography and social studies has concluded that on the one hand, increase in longevity is "... one of the most amazing demographic facts in modern history" (W. Sadler), people live longer and more active lives than ever before; on the other hand, ageing population:

- has influenced a change in the structure of population; the birth rates decrease and the consequence of rising human life expectancy has caused a change in the structure of life course;
- signifies a decrease in the percentage of the children and young people and an increase in the percentage of older people aged 65 and over;
- affects all aspects of the society including education, social and cultural activities [16].

Ukraine is among the leading European countries as regards the decrease in population. For the last 25 years, its population has decreased by about 10 mln people [3]. Both reduction of the population and change in the demographic structure have led to the population ageing and to decrease in the number of people who could potentially be economically active fraction in the total population. As economically active cohort of population forms a country's labor market, its size changes can influence the rate of economic growth.

In case of Ukraine there are five factors regarded as those that have a significant influence upon the demographic situation in Ukraine: high rate of mortality; low birth rate; rapid ageing of the population; migration of youth; social policy decline [3].

There are sudden changes in reproductive potential. Some notable decline has occurred during the recent 10 years. By the year 2020 the old-age dependency ratio is expected to be 2:1. It is also prognosticated that the population size in Ukraine will be constantly decreasing. By 2050 it will have fallen to 34 857 000. At the same time the percentage of the people aged 65+ will have reached 25, 4%. Thus, the middle 21st century will prove to be a severe trial for the state in the provision of pension [4].

The age structure of Ukraine population has shown a regressive type of regeneration: the percentage of people aged 65+ makes 15.6%, and children under 14 make 13.8 % [5]. The determining factors that affect the demographical situation and population ageing in Ukraine are the following:

- drop in the birth rates and the fact that people get married later in life which causes a decrease in the number of older people;
- relatively high death rate, especially among the people of the middle age, high abortion rate and infant mortality;

– some social and economic reasons – low level of medical care, low income of people, especially of middle class, social vulnerability;

– migration of the population, the outflow of economically active cohort – youth and people of middle age.

In such crucial demographic trends in Ukraine the effective social policy should be proved and consistently embedded. It seems that the political purposes should not be determined on the base of the quantitative parameters of population size; it is more rational to take into consideration the human resource to provide the best quality of life for all people. Under the circumstances of longevity revolution on the one hand, and ageing of the population on the other hand, older adult education is regarded as an integral component of this process.

Those facts seem to be essential from the point of view of not only demographers but also economists, gerontologists, educators and social workers. The great amount of older adults in Ukraine are highly educated people. It means that they make a population segment of the potential source of knowledge and experience. According to Census, about 44% of people above 60 have college or university education. In urban areas, this rate is higher than in rural areas. At the same time, the current rate of studying older adults in Ukraine is next to nothing: it is only 1.8% of people above working age is involved in learning, comparing to 26.6% in EU countries and about 31% in the United States [18].

Recently, the craving for independence is supposed as a prevailing tendency in education of older adults. On the one hand, this tendency arose on the bases of theoretical gerontology that declares individual's activity; on the other hand, it was a result of social costs reduction in most countries. Independence under present-day conditions should be connected with an individual's sustainable development.

In case of Ukraine, the educational activity of older adults is adopting rather slowly; modern legislative basis have not been worked out yet, and the opportunities of social partnership have not been used. In the situation of globalization and integration into the global economic, cultural, and educational movement, Ukrainian social and education policy should work out the conception of older adult education in order to encourage more people to learning activity and involve them into social and economic activity, enhances their potential to contribute to society. The obviously tiny amount of older adults who are involved in learning process points out the existence of some obstacles both of objective and subjective nature.

Many prominent researches believe that how people age is determined not so much by their genes but by the way they live that includes an opportunity for second growth, and is closely associated with lifelong learning. According to D. Garvin, people, whose lives illustrate growth, have been committed learners. They have been learning more about themselves, about opportunities and challenges, exploring new areas, and gaining new skills. Their learning has not been just mental stimulation with an accumulation of information. Strategic learning includes gathering information, interpreting it, and then applying learning to new behaviors – the way they work and live [6]. Thus, a socially adopted person being on a pension is a socially

active person who acts under his/her own steam, who leads his/her life, making full use of his/her personal and professional experience and intellectual potential.

The research on educational gerontology has revealed the strong links between an individual's well-being and learning activity during the third age, "... healthy active people who continue their intellectual interests as they grow older tend to maintain and even increase, various dimensions of cognitive functioning" [14, p.115].

R. Swindell accepts this statement but argues that although a course-affect relationship between intellectual challenge in later life and an individual's ability to continue to function effectively may remain difficult to establish, the empowering nature of education provides a convincing rationale for increasing the range of opportunities for older people [17, p.430]. Thus, education is considered as a significant part of social adaptation of the elderly. A socially adopted person being on a pension is a socially active person who acts under his/her own steam, who leads his/her life, making full use of his/her personal and professional experience and intellectual potential.

B. Groombridge states, that the importance of education in later life is recognized by both individuals and society through these major reasons:

- education can foster the self-reliance and independence of the elderly;
- education is a major factor in enabling older people to cope with practical and psychological problems in a complex, changing and fractured world;
- education for and by older people enhances their potential to contribute to society;
- education encourages the elderly to communicate their experiences to each other and to other generation, fostering balance, perspective and understanding which is valuable in a rapidly changing world of conflict;
- education is crucial for many older people's self-actualization and for lifelong learning [9, p.317].

Thus, the main role of education of older adults is to delay or minimize dependence by the rapidly growing older population, on the public purse. The importance of lifelong learning is seen not only in acquiring further knowledge, but also in communication, critical comparison, and personal experience. People who have an opportunity to learn in later life are more likely to be able to retain their independence than those whose options are limited.

Learning may be defined as "any more or less permanent change in behavior resulting from experience" (D. James). D. James distinguishes two main categories of learning process in later life:

- extension or exploratory learning through which individuals acquire new skills, develop new interests, increase understanding and broaden horizons;
- reinforcement or consolidatory learning through which individuals revisit and confirm experiences and ideas with which they feel comfortable, re-affirm their position in the world particularly after some major change or challenge in their lives [11].

Recent research has revealed that the most successful and effective educational program for older people is the University of the Third Age (UTA). It provides

opportunities for the elderly to enjoy a wide range of activities associated with well-being in later life. On the other hand, UTA provides a host of examples of individuals who initially are looking for some mutually supportive group of like-minded people with whom to interact informally [11]. It may be defined that UTA is a growing phenomenon which reflects the demographic trend of more people living longer, healthier lives. Two distinctly approaches to UTA (specified by R. Swindell and J. Thompson) were successfully adopted by a number of countries:

- the French model, based on the first U3A funded by professor Pierre Vella in 1973 in Toulouse, they offer mostly formal courses;

- and the British model arising in Cambridge in 1981, emphasizes informal, autonomous self-help groups in which the instructors are usually third-agers themselves, not college professors [4].

Higher education institutions should redefine its role in human capital formation by retraining older adults, teaching new life skills to cope with late-life problems, and offering opportunities for personal enrichment through learning. As it is expected by the year 2035, ¼ of the total population will be people aged over 65, so higher education will definitely no longer be a prerogative of declining cohort of young people. For this sector, it is strategically important to adapt new educational philosophy and make changes in the policy, fundamental structure, financing, and curriculum.

**Conclusion.** Thus, the result of the demographic changes leads to the conclusion that the growing age group of elderly people needs to be ensured the adaptation to rapid economic and social change. It is important to contribute to overcoming the problems of social isolation of this category of people. The state policy needs rethinking in the approaches to human potential, recognizing older adults as a valuable part of social and even economic resources, as this cohort is going to win a significant place in demographical and social structure. Main purposes of participating in learning programs for older adults are the following:

- preparation for retirement;
- prevention of senility;
- overcoming of negative features of old age by popularization of mental and physical activity;
- knowledge extension;
- encouragement of interpersonal attitudes and public activity.

We should consider further education as a successful adopting mechanism, which is mutually advantageous and helpful for both - individuals and society. It helps the old age generation of people to save themselves from social isolation and turn themselves for socially active members of society.

In order to develop the theoretical and practical experience of educational gerontology in Ukraine it is necessary to encourage the activity of Universities of the Third Age, clubs for older people, institutions of guardianship, universities and colleges, scientific and social associations. The analysis and implementation of

international theory and practice of international gerontological science can enable the adaptation and re-adaptation of old age people in Ukraine. These should be considered as an essential precondition for the sustainable development of democratic society.

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### СИВІЮЧЕ СУСПІЛЬСТВО В УКРАЇНІ: ЧАС ДЛЯ ЛІТНІХ ЛЮДЕЙ, ЩОБ ВСТУПИТИ ДО УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ

Несприятливі тенденції в демографічних процесах, зокрема стрімке старіння населення, створюють суспільству багато викликів політичного, економічного та соціального характеру. Відповідно до демографічних прогнозів ООН, до 2050 р. третину всього населення у світі становитимуть люди похилого віку. Найвиразніше тенденція до старіння суспільства спостерігається у розвинених країнах світу, що пояснюється підвищенням якості і, відповідно, тривалості життя, високим рівнем соціального захисту, а також низькою народжуваністю. Теоретичні і практичні дослідження доводять, що освіта у похилому віці – ефективний адаптаційний механізм, спосіб подальшого розвитку і самореалізації особистості. Тому існує нагальна потреба переосмислення ролі освіти людей похилого віку для “активного старіння” суспільства.

**Ключові слова:** демографічна криза, люди похилого віку, освіта людей похилого віку, старіння населення, третій вік.

