

RESEARCH OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION'S LEARNING NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN SOMOGY COUNTY

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In our research we would like to give information about the elder age population's learning needs and opportunities in our residence, in Somogy county. Main areas of the analysis are their physical and intellectual activities and their motivation onto the accomplishment of the community activities and the forming of the informal learning manners. Eurostat data shows participation in education of the 25-64 year age groups, but there are no relevant data for this age group in Hungary. In Hungary the age of students who participate in an adult education and training outside the school system relates to 55 years age group and above. The gerontology research did not receive wide-ranging publicity yet in the South-Transdanubian region's area of Somogy. We believe, that our results may be useful for the region and for our residence, Somogy county.

Keywords: motivation, elderly population, learning, formal, non-formal, informal, opportunities, needs

Characteristics of the elderly and of old age

In this presentation we would like to describe the learning needs and opportunities of the elderly in our region, Somogy County.

The population of the European Union is ageing considerably. According to Eurostat statistics, the average age in the Union is currently 39.8 and it will increase to 47.2 by 2060, so 30% of the EU's population will be 65 years old or over. This is almost double of 16% in 2010 (Hogyan..., 2012:1).

Hungary's population above the age of 65, was 1.6 million at the beginning of 2009, which is 16,4% out of the whole population. This can possibly reach 26% by the year 2050 (while the number of the county's citizens can decrease to 8 million.) For 100 children there was 62 elderly in 1980, while for 100 children there was already 110 elderly in 2009.

The figures are frightening; it is self-evident that an adequate and constructive solution is necessary (Máté, 1991). The raising number of old citizens takes up a significant part of the society's composition, which fact creates significant social theory, social policy and economic policy questions (Hun, 1984). People live longer and get into shape a better quality living conditions in their active life period.

The group of the elderly is not homogenous; it is characterised by physical extremes and intellectual differences. Dealing with the elderly is one of the hardest but also the most beautiful tasks in the practice of andragogy. One of the central questions of dealing with the elderly and of organising programmes for them is how we can trigger different group's motivation for activity of both physical and intellectual kind.

Antecedents of the examination

In our research we focused on the elderly population's (aged 60 and over) physical and intellectual community activity, motivation, execution of community activities as well as informal learning methods in Somogy County, South-Transdanubian region.

We think that it is a major current issue, on which the European Union also focuses as 2012 is the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.

Gerontological research has not had much publicity in Somogy County, South-Transdanubian Region yet, so we suppose that our results might be useful for our home, Somogy County, as well. Our conclusions could provide data for the planning of gerontological courses at our university and also for expanding the programmes of the county's pensioner clubs and homes. Best practices contribute to the perceptions of the elderly that they are useful members of the society and that it is possible to learn over 60. To be able to plan (within institutionalized borders) in relatively standard communities and areas, we need to take the following circumstances:

- The primary socialization's place, culture, habits, world of beliefs, traditions, value system, relationship with the majority culture.
- The school qualifications, the prestige of the former workplace, rule in the family and in the civil sphere.
- Whether they are willing to live with the need of earning new knowledge.
- Is there a hope for changing attitude.
- Whether there is a readiness for adjusting according to the community or not.
- Is there a need for normative or different culture-transition (partially or in its whole), or getting to know new cultures (this is a really common factor of the XXI. Century) comes up as necessity.

There are also a lot of obstructive factors, for example:

- many times the physical being is painful
- the absence of safe financial background
- loneliness or disappointment
- feeling of defencelessness
- purposelessness

The questions are remaining: with whom, when, where, among what circumstances, what, for what time is it possible and worthy to do, for aging people to not to feel like as if they were burden in this period of life.

We need to see the problem from all its viewpoints, so that we do not forget the massive, embedded surroundings and the interaction of specific systems. With satisfied physical needs, harmony, proper self-judgement, with a usual positive thinking, a good network of interpersonal relationships, stable family background, knowing where we really belong, (local community, culture, state, country) we can state that the state of balance can be established and maintained (Buda, 2003).

Education for the elderly within the system of adult education

The family also has an important role for old people, which gives them something to hold on to. Missing such feeling of safety can lead to loneliness. For this age it is as important to belong to a community as it is for any other.

Sadly, the emphasis of Hungary's adult education practice has shifted to labour market trainings completely. This is easily comprehensible, though, as labour market trainings are essential for the improvement of employability and for the sustainable economic development.

It would be a great mistake though, if we identified the adult's education and the notion of life-long studies in a long term, with the workforce-market education. Adult education needs to include a lot more changeable actions, so that differently specialized groups and other needs can appear, and differentiated educational goals, forms can come to fruition. When this variety – and the educated society with it – is established, the education of elderly can “grow up” as well in the Hungarian market.

The elderly characteristically prefer non-formal and informal learning; they like to choose shorter and more flexibly timed courses. Scenes where learning occurs almost “unnoticed” are more preferred, such as elderly clubs, classical music concerts, exhibitions, information lecture series, trips etc.

The delivery of adult learning inherently characteristic, but even more demand for practical, everyday usable knowledge as soon as possible. It is important to seek appropriate, the age and timestructure support features, partnership based teacher-student relationship, as well as the activate focus on forms of education.

Our institutions in many old man's life is an important place, because the pensioner clubs and several local, regional, and national events, "what do you know who"s, art demonstrations, is intended as for the elderly in the companies where you want isn't often, and become more open, and as a young peers. Hidy Pálné and as she described, Lachata István (Hidy & Lachata, 1994) behind proposals different profession, there are people who are "in silence, isolated work". Going to pension leisure time is freed up, more useful, and what they want to spend as they earlier working years. These efforts will be retained after the retirement, it's difficult, however, the change for them to have changed, since it was the circumstances, other conduct, the timestructure, the human relations. As a pensioner, important activity areas, everyday action tasks have disappeared from their lives, which helped the social usefulness them. This variety change ones worn out, others do not, however, must be some other activity area, activity search form, but this does not occur, but the society and themselves are considered important and joyful activity felt. Culture, the institutions, which are bringing about new human relations, physical, and intellectual activity help you- serve a very good purpose. In the culture intermediary groups in institutions, communities, are very good medium for individuals coming

with problems, experiences, where they experience the feeling of the safety and security. As an organization of an event, excursion, change of recipes, conversations, all occurrences are great for them.

Learning motivations of the elderly

The learning motivation can be aggregated in several point of view (Csoma 2005; Kocsis 2006; Réthyné 2003; Zrinszky 2005), although such conformations show significant overlap. Motivation is a relevant factor also in elderly learning. It is most closely related to intrinsic motivation which is triggered by the following: useful ways of passing the time in clubs, gatherings with friends or courses, keeping contacts, keeping up with new technologies, health protection etc. Neither the expectations of the workplace and the family nor economic advantages play a role any longer:

- Contacts, networking, various learning color spaces: the create link net: new links, in the older links are kept alive.
- Keeping pace with the new technique: more and more people want to use a mobile phone and digital camera, receive emails, from home with your kids at. Click on it, Gran! Courses For national success. Learning drivers for the elderly appears between the burden of desire is: "Yes, sir I could learn, despite the soot is! ".
- Reasons of health: the need to learn in order to protect human health, dietary meal to suit new brewing techniques, use medical aids to get to know.

Method

As primary research, interviews were used to examine the target group; we interviewed the leaders and the members of associations belonging to the Somogy County Association of Pensioner Organisations. As second source, we utilized the relevant bibliography and results of other research on different areas.

The organisations' experiences, goals, results

The conversation with two pensioner association, the "Frézia" Toponárért Pensioners Association and the Association executives (aunt Katie and Irénke aunt), and the members present.

This was the two organization become familiar with the choice, because we are friends, so the two association manager, were very happy to help us. During the conversation topics covered are intended for so-called micro-research.

The "*Frézia*" Pensioner Organisation was founded in 1992. Just the existence the association was in days 20 anniversary, which form a two-hour program, urban leaders have been invited. At first, they started as club in 2003 and then it have become Organisation. They have both their constituent instrument, with book keeper. The association is currently 32 members (10 men and 22 women). The eldest member: 87 years of age, with the youngest, who recently came to the society: 55 years of age. The majority of its members over 70 years. Initially the group had started with Gombos Márti who was then, the local schoolmaster, was led by her, the current leader: Jánosné Németh, aunt Katie, who also worked on teachers.

In their one year forward program, which includes, according to date of the tasks, and the related major events for months, traditions (e.g. February: carnival: April: húsvétolás, etc.). Each year, they close management meeting with an annual report. They satisfy more request for example they go on events with and introduce the choreography fabricated by the leader in national clothing purchased by association. They are called several times to choire meetings, namedays, birthdays, and they organise excursions. The quality things are carried out by Aunt Katie. Today the members courageously take poems, songs, into the local community life.

There are also called to others (e.g. , brother association) and what is heard there, they would bring in their society. Each 5 year they change leader. Aunt Katie again elected by the other members, she is a very popular leader. Their brother associations are: Kaposfüred, Kaposszentjakab, Toponárért Pensioner Organistation, elder's club. Maintain a good connection with the neighborhood and pensioners, as well as other civil society organizations. In 2011 they participated on the police crime prevention program in two times, or choral speaking, and they are on different cultural events as well. They keep a log since 2008 of the responsibilities , each results, programmes (see Annex). In this photos, entries, poetry, reports, invitations, then knowing names of annual level, etc. , we can see.

The *Pensioners Association Toponárért* on 1 June 1998 has been registered as associations. In terms of their broad scale: cultural, song, poem, dance, prose and play. At first they had started with the head count with 57, meanwhile some of them left or passed away.

There are currently 31-en (21 women and 10 men). Head of the association: Ács Ferencné Irénke, who from 2000 is leader in the group. They also have their constituent instrument, log and annual programme schedule, economic officer. The average age of group is 72 years.

Here also the eldest age member: 87 years of age, with the youngest 55 years of age. In addition, the association has 25 head of another organization, and therefore also lead to a great experience. Such organizations such as the "Life" organizations, such as the great years.

Due to the leader's agility, positive attitudes and nice approach, many programs are organised: three-day excursions to any point of the country (Debrecen, Gyula, Sopron, Máriapócs, etc.) from Siófok to Nagyatád, Budapest, Dombóvár and on many tours they are invited. Clothing for folkdance and singing: white blouse and skirt was funded by the association as well. They are also in daily contact with a lot of other organization. Summer, the associations shall be suspended their work.

There are a lot of similarities in the work of the associations and concerning their activities they perform very similar tasks, too. The members of the examined associations have lived in Kaposvár micro-region for more than 30 years. However, not all of them were born here. In addition, their family and friends also live here, which is an important aspect for them. Most of them have been retired for 15-18 years on average, including those in disability pension, who retired relatively early.

None of the associations have a homepage, because they have no time or appropriate knowledge for that, although they are planning to develop one. It is salient that all associations' members used to work in education, light industry, commerce and catering. Almost all of them had only one workplace during their whole careers.

The vast majority live with their spouses, but living with a wider family (children, grandchildren) is also characteristic. Family care is important for them; they help with family life in a wide range of regards, like looking after grandchildren and of course financial support. As for spare time activities, almost all the answer options we indicated are characteristic like gardening, watching TV, singing, cooking, reading, attending pensioner clubs. Nobody chose the answer "I don't have free-time".

The associations also function as "partner-institutions", so they often cooperate, especially in connection with town or town-district programmes held for preserving traditions (e.g. Village Day, Harvest March etc.). Thus, they are completely open to meet unknown groups and people of similar age. They often go on trips even for several days that they organise and book themselves. Today these trips are financed by the members themselves; earlier they were financed from application funds with the help of local contacts. However, members are willing to pay for different programmes. Club meetings are held weekly in the afternoons.

Answering the question why community is important for them they have said that it is important to have social contacts, participate in communities, preserve and pass on traditions and that they can do so in such groups. They can always learn something new from each other, like cooking, gardening, sewing or baking ideas and they can exchange local news.

They do not really like package tours offered by travel agents. Particularly because they have already been on such trips (e.g. most often one-day trips combined with lectures offered on flyers), but they think they are "deceived" with these, so they rather arrange programmes themselves. They have unequivocally emphasised that there are only the weekly club gatherings for the elderly, as local and other entertainment opportunity. They feel that if they did not care for each other, they would be left alone, and also that there are a lot of prejudices against them and they are being completely ignored. They also attend local programmes (not exclusively within the area) and they go to the town to some interesting lectures, gatherings or programmes, such as national celebrations, singing gatherings, choir gatherings, common programmes with partner-institutions, performances, literary gatherings etc. These programmes are very important for them because it is a must to belong to a community, but the one in which they live is much rather a "village community".

They know and use telecommunication devices such as landline phone, mobile phone, computer, video, DVD-player, TV. Almost all club members have a mobile phone and they have agreed with us that it is really useful to have one because they can call for help immediately in trouble. It was not easy for them to learn to use the mobile phone, but their families, grandchildren, club members and friends can help if necessary.

They are learning to use computers. As for the Internet, 3 respondents in one of the associations, and 1 respondent in the other one have said they use the Internet "regularly", e.g. for writing official letters and invitations.

They have heard of the two social contact websites (iwiw and facebook) but only 2 people have registered their profiles and they regularly chat with each other. It is mostly their grandchildren who help them with Internet use. The "Frézia" Association manager profession an educator only due to his disciples that he was heard above are on Facebook, but she is not in use, however, is planning to register herself. She is the only for the two organizations, who informally, i.e. computer knowledge herself began to learn, to do this is also a starting package purchased by itself, at home and learning theory, and with his grandchildren in practice to try the learned knowledge. It is very enjoyable and I like it.

As for television programmes all the interviewed members like political programmes and series. Besides these they also watch cooking, clothing and quiz shows. Most of them, however, can afford to pay only for the basic channels (Hungarian channels M1, TV2, RTL Klub, ATV, Local TV, Hír TV, etc.)

They consider lifelong learning important. They have emphasised that they do not primarily mean school learning but for example the fact that they learn a lot of poems, songs, recipes and ideas from each other.

Not everyone knows about learning opportunities outside the local school. They know these opportunities from the information provided by the Somogy County Pensioners Association, which always informs the pensioner associations and clubs by post. They have clearly pointed out that if there were courses that they were interested in, they would love to participate in them.

They think it is important to improve our knowledge in old age, because we must adapt to our grandchildren and the changes, because – as they have put it – “the world now is different from old times”.

The leaders of the associations attend training courses if they have opportunities and necessary information about the courses. They consider the participation in the trainings very useful because they could use what they have learnt in the courses for their work with the association. The trainings were free of charge, financed by application funds (NCA).

They were proud to share their results, plans and memories and they were very happy that we paid attention to them and began to deal with this area. We suggested further cooperation which they gladly accepted.

Summary, conclusions

The group of the elderly is not homogenous; it is characterised by physical extremes and intellectual differences. Dealing with the elderly is one of the hardest but also the most beautiful tasks in the practice of andragogy. One of the central questions of dealing with the elderly and of organising programmes for them is how we can trigger different group's motivation for activity of both physical and intellectual kind. In Hungary the situation is complicated by several facts. Firstly, as a result of the low activity rates a lot of people leave the labour market earlier, even decades before the retirement age. Secondly, a number of elderly people face financial problems and for them the search for identity is of lesser importance. Thirdly, few elderly programmes are available outside big towns; as the interviewed associations have confirmed.

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