

Lifelong Learning for People of the Third Age: Supports Intellectual Level, Preserves Self-Esteem

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Abstract: the article analyzes the history of the University of the Third Age, the importance of education for people of the third age, considers the views of representatives of different eras, the opinions of scientists, the psychological characteristics of people belonging to the category of the third age.

Keywords: lifelong learning, University of the Third Age, education, elderly person, third age, lifestyle, “French model”, “British model”.

Lifelong learning is not just a buzzword, but a severe necessity in a world of constant technological and social change. And this applies to all ages. Older people who have stepped into the 21st century should realize that the quality of their life directly depends on their willingness to learn new things.

The history of the University of the Third Age as an educational direction dates back more than five to ten years after the opening in 1962 of the first institute for retired professionals in New York, which was later transformed into the Institute for Retirement Education. Ten years later, in France, in Toulouse, the first University of the Third Age in France was established. Later, similar institutions appeared in many countries of the world and received significant development.

At present, the University of the Third Age continues to successfully develop and implement various functions, while its main goal is to adapt older people to the social and economic changes taking place in society and ensure a high quality of their life for the benefit of each person and society as a whole [1].

“Third age” is the stage of a person’s life cycle, at which he leaves the sphere of professional activity, changes the nature of his work, lifestyle due to circumstances related to the physiological characteristics of an elderly person. “Third age” is the conventional name for the first years of retirement age, bringing a person closer to old age. This is the age of the highest wisdom, common sense, the prevailing philosophy of life, the accumulated vast experience of success and loss. A person at this age is a contemplative, observer, adviser, consultant, spiritual mentor, an example of kindness and high morality” [2].

Modern pedagogy is based on the vision of education as a continuous process. According to the Memorandum of Lifelong Education [3], a person’s learning should be carried out throughout his life. This idea did not come up today. The question of the need to continue teaching in old age was raised in antiquity.

Of the ancient authors, the idea of the need to continue education at this stage is most fully revealed by Mark Tullius Cicero (106 BC - 43 BC) in his famous dialogue “On Old Age”.

He names ways to combat aging: you need to “monitor your health, resort to moderate exercise, eat and drink as much as you need to restore strength, and not to oppress them. At the same time, it is necessary to support not only the body, but to a much greater extent the mind and spirit, because they, if oil is not added to them, like a lamp, go out from old age.

Activities and knowledge Cicero calls “food for the soul”. With age, well-educated people's interest in science increases. “A greater pleasure than this pleasure for the mind, of course, cannot be.”

The idea of Cicero about the need to maintain mental activity is extremely close to modern research [4].

In the scientific literature, instead of the concepts of “old age” and “old age”, the term “third age” is increasingly used, avoiding the involitional coloring of this stage. The category of “elderly people”, or “people of the third age”, as they are commonly called in the world, includes people aged 60 to 74 years [5].

The term “third age” was introduced into scientific circulation by the British scientist P. Laslett in 1996. From that moment on, it is understood as the retirement age, which marks the appearance of another stage in the human life cycle - between adulthood and old age. The old age itself received from him the name of the “fourth age”.

The study of the social problems of people of the third age is one of the urgent problems of modern society, since there is both a significant increase in the number of people of retirement age, and varying degrees of disruption of their interaction with society, with various social institutions. These disruptions of interaction tend to break many social ties and push people out of public life, that is, lead to social exclusion.

Many authors note that in the chain of actions leading to the displacement of people of the third age from society, the first is retirement, then the loss of relatives and friends, and, finally, placement in a closed institution [6].

As the English scientist Groombridge emphasizes, getting an education in old age serves to solve several reasons, among which he outlined, firstly, education can contribute to the self-reliance and independence of older people ... thereby reducing the growing demands on public and private resources, secondly, education is the main factor enabling older people to cope with innumerable practical and psychological problems in a complex, changing and fragmented world, the third reason sounds like education for older people themselves enhances their actual or potential contribution to development of society, the fourth reason is that the self-knowledge of older people and the transfer of their experience to other generations contributes to balance, perspective and understanding, which is valuable in a rapidly changing world of conflicts, and the last reason is indicated as education is crucial for many older people, especially for those who aspire to self-expression and learning [7].

Emphasizes the potential of the late stage of human life as a period of vigorous activity favorable for travel, new interests, hobbies and opportunities for education and development. Working retirees study to prolong their professional longevity; non-working - pursue different goals - maintaining health, communication, leisure, broadening their horizons, etc. Recently, the interest of researchers has been attracted precisely by the education of non-working pensioners, which is a means of social adaptation after the termination of employment [8].

A change in lifestyle that occurs in connection with a decrease in labor activity, retirement, a drop in social status, a narrowing of the social environment, and other losses leads to the fixation of thoughts, ideas, ideas on one's own life. As a result, either an integrative perception and acceptance of one's life in all its fullness and diversity, with all the difficulties, mistakes, achievements, or a global rejection of life and oneself in it is formed. In the first case, one can speak of wisdom, in the latter, of despair. Although, an ordinary person can be both at different and at an equal distance from these poles.

In 1979, a group of scientists at Harvard University started a curious experiment. Settling in a country holiday home for elderly men - the youngest of them was 70 years old - they were invited to go back twenty years, act as if it was 1959, when they were all still working, and talk about the events of that time in the present tense. To complete the picture, the subjects were given certificates with photographs from twenty years ago. The music of the 60s sounded in the house. All newspapers and magazines were dated the same year.

Time Travel was amazing. Absolutely all the subjects rejuvenated outwardly. Those who were served by younger relatives before the experiment switched to self-service. In addition, judging by the results of the studies, all subjects increased muscle strength and improved short-term memory. They began to see and hear better. The joints became more flexible and the ability to learn increased.

In short, the results of the experiment have shown that in old age the physical condition largely depends on the psychological attitude and that the way of life is largely determined by the external attitude. In other words, if others treat older people as incapable of vigorous activity - whether it be physical or mental, it does not matter - then they behave accordingly.

Lifelong learning, or rather, that aspect of it that is sometimes called “third age” education, is a relatively new, but actively developing and very effective form of promoting a culture of constructive old age.

Most of all, older people do not want to remain inactive, they want to realize missed opportunities in education, creative activity, family relationships. They wonder: how should this time be spent? How can you make good use of this time? The need for an active life of older people through their education is one of the hot topics of modern scientific research and is perceived as a necessary part of the education system. Education not only allows you to maintain an intellectual level, but the very achievement of goals brings satisfaction, creating a positive emotional background, maintains self-esteem, self-confidence [9].

The process of acquiring new knowledge by older people is unique for the reason that in old age the individual characteristics of each person play a significant role.

The participation of older people in educational activities gives them clear advantages, especially in terms of achieving their well-being in life, increasing their sense of responsibility for themselves, a sense of satisfaction with what they have achieved and improving their health; in addition, it gives them the opportunity to actively participate in public life.

The need to preserve the active life of older people through their education is one of the current topics of modern scientific research in the field of gerontology, andragogy and adult social education. In order for the elderly to be physically and spiritually healthy for as long as possible, and for the young to better understand and appreciate the representatives of the older generation, it is necessary:

- help an elderly person to correctly understand what is happening;
- to help in the realization of his own capabilities;
- help in the implementation of what an elderly person could not do during his life;
- to help him gain knowledge for further development and a fulfilling life in modern society.

These goals are achievable if the education of the elderly is developed as a component of the process of continuous education. The right to education, one of the fundamental human rights, cannot be limited on the basis of age, which implies the continuity of education and the possibility of its continuation in old age. It is the adult who is learning that plays the leading role in the learning process. It is an adult who sets specific learning goals for himself, while striving for independence, self-realization, self-government, and seeks the fastest possible application of the knowledge and skills acquired during training. And since an adult has professional and life experience, knowledge, skills that should be used in the learning process, his learning should not contradict his own experience [10].

To date, we can say that the model of obtaining education by persons of the third age, which implement various universities, is well established. There are numerous studies of the “third age”, the position of universities in relation to the education of people of the “third age” and the specifics of educational programs for the elderly in different countries of the world. The biological and psychological reasons for the return of people of the “third age” to education are investigated. Studies have found that the more active, sociable, healthier and more educated older people are, the less burden they represent for the family and society, because the involvement of older people in social affairs, study and leisure has a positive effect on their mental and physical health [11].

In most parts of the world, Third Age universities are an established reality. Classical universities of the world, in accordance with the goals, objectives and mission of the concept of continuous education, have in their academic structure a sector aimed at meeting the educational needs of people of the “third age”. This is due to the rather rapid aging of the population and the presence of legislative acts, thanks to which universities were forced to open their doors to older citizens. The programs offered by universities for people of the “third age” are aimed at maintaining their active life position and physical health in the first place.

Let us consider in more detail the features of the Universities of the Third Age, educational courses that are offered for the elderly in various countries. First of all, it is worth noting that there are two models of how education for third-age people is organized, namely the “French model”, which involves the creation of classes or courses for older people on the basis of local universities with the allocation of state funds for this. This model has become widespread in Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and many other countries of Western and Central Europe.

There is another model, called the British one; its creators, a group of historians and sociologists from the University of Cambridge, proposed in the early 1980s. to create a volunteer organization based on the principle of self-help and self-organization, the peculiarity of the British model is that it proceeds from the position of the theory of geragogy that older people have psychological and mental characteristics. According to the British model, members of the volunteer community must themselves create interest groups, provide their homes for classes, act as either organizers or simply learners, and sometimes as teachers. The groups are completely autonomous from each other, they are not managed or controlled by anyone except their creators and members, and each member of the group pays a small annual fee. The British model of teaching people of the third age is being implemented in the UK itself, as well as in countries such as Australia and New Zealand [12].

Summing up all of the above, lifelong learning is an opportunity for the comprehensive development of an individual and a way to promote the development of society as a whole. The key idea is the ability of absolutely any person to learn, develop their capabilities, acquire new knowledge, skills and abilities, regardless of age. Such an approach promotes career advancement, demand, self-realization and personal growth, allows you to feel in demand, promotes not only social integration and an active citizenship, but also financial stability, as well as competitiveness and employment opportunities in any age. And also, lifelong learning helps psychological and intellectual health. The human brain develops and is in good shape only with regular training. It is worth throwing loads, as intelligence decreases, interest in the new disappears, age-related diseases and degradation occur. Lifelong learning provides intellectual longevity and a good psycho-emotional tone.

Thus, education is now recognized by society as an essential strategy for the development of people in the third age and a way to ensure a successful, independent, productive later life.

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