

## ACTIVE AGEING AND ACTIVE OLD AGE IN THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

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The study presented here was published within the research task VEGA of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Academy of Science no. 1/0001/18 called *Preparation for ageing and old age - possibilities of andragogical intervention*.

**Abstract:** The study analyses the concepts of active ageing and active old age, comparing them to usual ageing and usual old age. In the first chapter the author deals with the concept of active ageing, its attributes and influencing factors by means of several transnational documents. He also pays his attention to the role of age management in active ageing and active living of the old age. The second chapter is focused on the relationship between active ageing, active old age and social inclusion of older adults and seniors from the educational point of view.

**Keywords:** (active) ageing, (active) old age, social inclusion, older adults, seniors, education, age management.

### Introduction

Ageing, old age and retirement often provoke worries of young and older people. Also seniors are worried about this life period. They often think about its course, what it will look like, whether it will be according to their expectations or whether it will fulfil their required criteria of quality.

It is evident that several factors influence the life in the old age (e.g. Tokárová, 2002; Balogová, 2005; Heřmanová, 2012; Zimermanová, 2012a, 2013, etc.). People can influence some of these factors so that they are beneficial for them. However, many respondents (clients of institutions for seniors) stated that health problems<sup>1</sup> and also their age are the key factors with a negative impact on their need or interest in further education (Határ, 2014b, p. 42). Despite this fact, it is necessary to say that physical and mental activity play a very important role if they respect the health and age limitations of people (more in detail: Čomaníčová, 1998; Štilec, 2004; Krívohlavý, 2011; Gracová, Selecký, 2017 etc.).

The aim of this study is to define the concepts of active ageing and active old age comparing them to the traditional perception of ageing and old age. R. Čevela, Z. Kalvach and L. Čeledová (2012, p. 28) state that ageing and old age can have three basic forms: 1) *successful ageing and healthy (active) old age*, 2) *usual ageing and old age* and 3) *pathological ageing*, and we would also add *pathological old age*. The subject of our study is to compare these forms of ageing and old age, focusing more on the active ageing and active living of the senior age. We understand these concepts of active ageing and active old age as tools of social inclusion of older adults (pre-retirement age) and seniors because these age groups are often at the risk of being socially excluded. We look at the topic of active ageing and active old age mainly from the educational point of view.

### 1 (Active) ageing and (active) old age - conceptual and relational analysis

#### 1.1 Ageing versus Active Ageing and Old Age versus Active Old Age

There is a difference between ageing, which is considered to be a natural and lifelong process, and the old age, which is a period of life and the result of ageing<sup>2</sup>. If we perceive this difference, then it is necessary to differentiate also between the concepts of active ageing and active old age. This is not a usual point of

view in English literature and legislation (compare, e.g.: *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework*, 2002 or *Active Ageing Index for 28 European Union Countries*, 2014). Also the Czech sociologist J. Hasmanová Marhánková (2013, p. 17) or I. Tomeš and L. Bočková (2017, p. 47) probably understand these concepts as synonyms. However, in our study we will strictly differentiate the concepts of ageing and active ageing as well as the concepts of old age and active old age, though these concepts can overlap in the last periods of life (when people are in the senior age and they continue getting older).

R. Čevela, Z. Kalvach and L. Čeledová (2012, p. 20) define the concept of *ageing* as a complex of involutory, morphological and functional changes whose beginning is gradual, with a significant interindividual variability. At the same time, it is also a heterochronic process after reaching the sexual maturity. The human body has to adapt to these changes. According to these authors, the process of ageing is dissociated, disintegrated and asynchronous, partially encoded genetically and partially developed by coincidental phenomena, mistakes and disorders.

The above mentioned definition of the process of ageing is more physiological, or medical. In order to complete this definition, it is important to say that ageing is "a process of gradual involution with accompanying biological, psychic and social changes in the human organism and personality" (Hotár, Paška, Perhács et al., 2000, p. 421). Nowadays, the spiritual changes / aspects in the personalities of older people also belong to frequently discussed topics (more in detail: Balogová, 2005; Ondrušová, 2011; Kováč, 2013; Kaminská, 2017 etc.).

R. Čevela, Z. Kalvach and L. Čeledová (2012, p. 19) perceive *old age* as "the last developmental stage which closes the human life. In general, this is an expression and result of involuntary functional and morphological changes. They have a specific speed and significant interindividual variability. These changes lead to a typical form designed as *the phenotype of the old age*. This phenotype is modified by the influence of surroundings, health condition, lifestyle and socioeconomic and psychical factors".

As we have mentioned above, we consider it relevant to differentiate not only the concepts of ageing and old age, but also the concepts of ageing and active ageing and the concepts of the old age and active old age. We perceive active ageing and active old age as a higher level of the attitude of people to their own ageing and old age. This attitude is not a passive approach, but it is characterized with a meaningful activity. We could compare the relationship between ageing and active ageing and between the old age and active old age to the difference or relationship between the education and self-education. The prerequisite for the self-education is a mature personality which has a high level of autoregulation (Perhács, 2011, p. 95). In the same way, active ageing and active old age represent a certain "top" of human effort.

In the specialised literature there we can find several concepts or forms of the so called desirable ageing. P. Vanhuysse (2012, in: Repková, 2012a, pp. 12 – 13) mentions four key concepts: *the concept of active ageing*, *the concept of healthy ageing*, *the concept of productive ageing* and *the concept of successful ageing*. According to the definition of the WHO (2002), *the concept of healthy ageing* is about the ability of people to keep going even though their physical functions are becoming weaker. *The concept of productive ageing* focuses on the economic contribution of seniors that is measured with their paid work or voluntarism. *The concept of successful ageing* is related to a low predisposition to diseases or chronic disorders, as well as to a high cognitive and physical capacity and active participation in different areas of life. P. Vanhuysse (2012) explains that the concept of active ageing is based on three key pillars: health, participation and safety as they were defined by the WHO (in: Repková, 2012a, pp. 12 – 13).

<sup>1</sup> In specialised literature there is often used the concept of *polymorbidity* that means cumulation of illnesses (more in detail: e.g. Haškovcová, 2010, p. 251).

<sup>2</sup> The mentioned definition of ageing and old age was stated in the *Swiss Information platform of human rights* (<https://www.humanrights.ch/de/menschenrechte-themen/alter/problematik/>).

The WHO states in the document *Aktiv Altern: Rahmenbedingungen und Vorschläge für politisches Handeln* (2002, p. 12) that active ageing is characteristic of individuals as well as groups of population. "The word *active* is related to incessant participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic life. It does not mean only the possibility to stay physically active or included in the working process" (*Aktiv Altern: Rahmenbedingungen und Vorschläge für politisches Handeln*, 2002, p. 12). It is also written in this document that older people can participate actively in the life of their families, peers, surroundings and country even though they are not active in the working process anymore, or they can have some kind of disability.

I. Tomeš and L. Bočková (2017, p. 46) say that the *Index of active ageing* introduced the new perception of active ageing into the practice: "Active ageing refers to situations when people continue with their participation in the labour market and they are involved in other non-paid activities as well (e.g. providing healthcare within a family or voluntarism). They live in a healthy, independent and safe way during the time they get older". The mentioned index of active ageing is based on four attributes:

1. *employment* (indicators: the level of employment at the age of 55 - 59, 60 - 64, 65 - 69 and 70 - 74);
2. *participation in the society* (indicators: voluntary activities, care about children and grandchildren, care about older adults and political participation);
3. *independent, healthy and safe life* (indicators: physical activities, approach to healthcare, independent life, secure financial situation, physical safety and lifelong learning);
4. *capacity and favourable environment for active ageing* (indicators: remaining length of life after the age of 55, length of healthy life after the age of 55, mental well-being, usage of ICT, social relationships and acquired education) (*Active Ageing Index for 28 European Union Countries*, 2014, pp. 14 - 15; Tomeš, Bočková, 2017, pp. 46 - 47).

According to the propagation material *Active Ageing* compiled by A. Račková and R. Očaba (2012) on the occasion of the *European year of active ageing and solidarity between generations*, this active ageing is based on four principles: active participation in the labour market and communitarian life, active work in the household and active spending of leisure time.

J. Hasmanová Marhánková (2013, pp. 18 - 19), inspired with the work of K. Boudiny (2012), mentions three approaches to active ageing. The first, one-dimensional approach is typical of the social politics of the European states. Active ageing is defined there in the economic context as the participation of seniors in the labour market. The second, multidimensional approach defines several levels of active ageing, including the active spending of leisure time. Unfortunately, this approach tends to divide the leisure time into active and passive one and this leads to the exclusion of certain groups of population from the category of actively ageing people (e.g. groups with unfavourable health condition). The third approach does not look at active ageing only from the point of view of activity and behaviour of people. It perceives the active ageing as "a life situation that enables people to stay self-dependent, providing them satisfactory conditions for the personal development. However, this conception makes active ageing impossible / unreachable for those who are already dependent on other people due to their worsened health condition" (in: Hasmanová Marhánková, 2013, p. 19).

*Participation in social life* is one of those three principles of active ageing mentioned in the definition by WHO. This participation is divided in three following areas:

- 1) *Offer of educational and formational possibilities in every age* (basic education and minimal knowledge in healthcare, lifelong education in different areas, such as ICT, new agricultural techniques, etc.);

- 2) *Active participation of older people in the economic development by means of formal and informal work relationships and non-paid work according to their needs, preferences and abilities* (fight with the poverty and possibilities to earn money, formal and informal work, non-paid activity);
- 3) *Full participation of older people in family and communitarian life* (transport, involvement of older people in planning, realization and evaluation of healthcare, recreational and social programmes; society for all age groups; real and positive view at the process of ageing; supporting of the access of women to all possibilities of active participation; organizations for protecting the rights and interests of older people) (*Aktiv Altern: Rahmenbedingungen und Vorschläge für politisches Handeln*, 2002, pp. 51 - 52).

Referring to below mentioned authors, J. Hasmanová Marhánková (2010) says that this activity gradually gets the character of the so called "*universal good*". This concept is based on the gerontological works which present the advantages of active lifestyle in the old age (Katz, S., 2000). On the other hand, this connection of activity with the life in the old age is in opposition to the traditional perceiving of the old age characterized with the decrease of physical and psychical functions or passivity (Hazan, 1994; Katz, 1996). The author agrees with the opinion of M. Andrews (1999) that "positive images of ageing often blend with the images of the productive age or youth and all specific features of the old age are ignored" (in: Hasmanová Marhánková, 2010, p. 216). For this reason, it is indispensable to understand the concept of activity in the senior age in a correct way when we compare it to the activity in the pre-productive and productive age.

Several factors influence active ageing. The WHO divides them in the following way:

- 1/ *health condition and social care (supporting of health, prevention of illnesses, nursing care, long-term care, care about mental health),*
  - 2/ *influence of behaviour (smoking, physical activity, healthy diet, care about the oral cavity and teeth, alcohol, medicaments, iatrogenia, consistent observance of the therapy),*
  - 3/ *personal factors (biological and genetic factors, psychological factors - e.g. intelligence and cognitive abilities),*
  - 4/ *surroundings (safety of surroundings - e.g. wheelchair access, safety at home, risk of falls, clear water and air, safe food),*
  - 5/ *social factors (access to social help and care, protection against violence and exploiting, possibilities of further education),*
  - 6/ *economic factors (income, work, social insurance),*
- whereas *culture* and *gender* are perceived as universal factors (*Aktiv Altern: Rahmenbedingungen und Vorschläge für politisches Handeln*, 2002, pp. 19 - 32).

Based on our experience and quoted literature in our study, we would like to say that, in general, *active ageing* (as an integrated unit formed of two key words: active and ageing) represents a *conscious or unconscious process occurring during all the life (or only in a certain phase) which influences all (or only selected) personal features and human body (i.e. physical, psychical, social and spiritual aspects). This process is accepted or not accepted by the ageing person and its basis consists of exclusively voluntary or involuntary human activity (not passivity). This point of view takes into consideration all possibilities and limitations of the given person.* On the other hand, *active old age* (as an integrated unit formed of two key words: active and old age) represents a *conscious or unconscious period of life which is accepted or not accepted by the senior. The basis of this life period lies in exclusively voluntary or involuntary human activity (not passivity) that respects the possibilities and limitations of the senior* (Határ, 2018).

Z. Bútorová et al. (2013b, p. 13) mention the creation of three important documents in Slovakia in the year 2013 that support

the idea of active ageing. This idea was fully accepted and substituted the prevailing attitude to older people as object of protection. Documents such as *The Strategy of active ageing (Stratégia aktívneho starnutia)* and *The Action plan of fulfilling the strategy of active ageing (Akčný plán naplnenia stratégie aktívneho starnutia)* were created within the national project *Strategy of active ageing (Stratégia aktívneho starnutia)*. "They were aimed at detailed analysis of connections between the demographic ageing, the labour market and the retirement system. They were based on the analytical work of experts dealing with demographic, legal and sociological aspects of the given problematic area" (Bútorová et al., 2013b, p. 13). They also created an additional document to this *Strategy of active ageing - The national programme of active ageing for the years 2014 - 2020 (Národný program aktívneho starnutia na roky 2014 - 2020)*. In its introduction there is stated that "this is a new and comprehensive programme document aimed at supporting of human rights of older people with their active approach by means of public supportive politics. It does not deal only with the employment and employability of older people (the Strategy of active ageing primarily focuses on this area), but also with the area of supporting their lifelong education, civic and social activities excluded from the formal labour market, independence, dignity, economic and social security, including the protection against the bad treatment in all social areas and relationships" (Národný program aktívneho starnutia na roky 2014 - 2020, 2014, p. 3).

As aforementioned, the topic of active ageing and active old age is often connected with the employing of seniors and their staying at the labour market as long as possible. Here arises a question related to the role of *age management* in this social measure. The age management is understood as managing which takes into consideration the age and abilities of (ageing) employees. It focuses on three levels - individual level (a person), organisational level (a company) and a national or regional level (society) (Cimbálníková et al., 2011, p. 4; Cimbálníková et al., 2012, p. 34). T. Saarelma-Thiel (2011, pp. 15 - 16) describes a model connecting the typical critical changes at workplace from the long-term perspective with supporting managing measures (examples of good practice). This model consists of the following phases of working life: 1. getting used to the working life - a student becomes an employee, 2. promotion, 3. coping with the change in working ability - a healthy employee gets ill, 4. career at the crossroad - the risk of unemployment, change or loss of work, dissatisfaction with work, 5. *leaving the labour market - the right time and way of leaving from work*. Z. Bútorová et al. (2013a, p. 4) say that "two types of reforms, positive and negative reforms, are applied in order to introduce the strategy of active ageing. The positive reform means a complex support of the model of working ability for all generations. The negative reform is based on the prolonging of the age limit for the retirement and restriction of possibilities of the pre-retirement". From their research (Bútorová et al., 2013a, p. 8, 18) it is evident that *the ambition to learn new things, or further education* belong to the important general requirements of employers for their employees. Employees from the age group of 50 - 64 have a negative attitude to their own further education. It is a fact that in Slovakia is a lack of financial support to motivate people to further education. At the same time, the amount of money for lifelong education is decreasing with the increasing age of employees (Bútorová et al., 2013a, p. 19). Therefore, it is important to answer the question how we can support the idea or the general social tendency of active ageing and preparation for active old age by means of education.

### 1.2 Relationship between active ageing, active old age and social inclusion of older adults and seniors from the educational point of view

Nowadays, the concept of educational and social inclusion (e.g. Lechta, ed., 2012; Kusá et al., 2008; Gerbery, Porubánová, Repková, 2005; *Národný akčný plán sociálnej inklúzie 2004 - 2006*, 2004, etc.), is a frequently discussed topic, problem or challenge. In the specialised literature, *the social inclusion* is

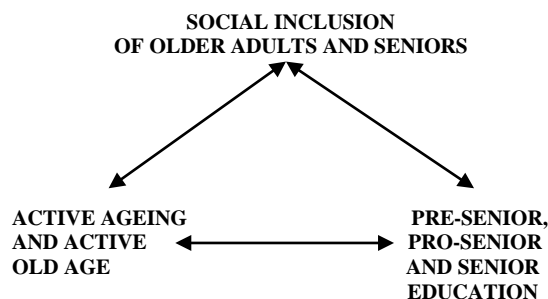
defined as "a process that guarantees that socially excluded people or people at the risk of being socially excluded have an access to such opportunities which help them to fully participate in the economic, social and cultural life. It also enables them to live in a way that is considered to be normal by the given society" (Kusá et al., 2012, p. 8). Social inclusion is often connected with the problem of poverty (e.g. *Národný akčný plán sociálnej inklúzie 2004 - 2006*, 2004; Gerbery, Porubánová, Repková, 2005; Kusá et al., 2012). However, the practice confirms the fact that also adults in the pre-retirement age and mainly seniors are often at the risk of being socially excluded (compare, e.g. § 2, part 2, letter e) of the *Law no. 448/2008 Codex of Law about social services* subsequently amended. Regarding the question of employment compare also Cimbálníková et al., 2011; Vaska, 2014; *Law no. 5/2004 Codex of Law about services of employment* subsequently amended). On the other hand, the *National action plan of social inclusion 2004 - 2006* (2004, pp. 9 - 12) states that other primary groups of population are at bigger risk of poverty and social exclusion (e.g. unemployed people, families with children, Roma population, disabled people, migrants, homeless people, etc.).

L. Cimbálníková et al. (2011, p. 38) say (in the context of the age management topic) that social inclusion is rather "a current phenomenon of the state's social politics", whereas social exclusion "tends to be nonrecurring in many cases and it is very often irreversible. The reason of the majority of cases of exclusion is the insufficient economic, social and cultural capital".

Adult individuals, who are before reaching the retirement age and real leaving from the working life, as well as retired seniors can have an active or passive attitude to their own ageing and old age. They can have different motivation for such behaviour. However, it would be beneficial for these pre-retired people and seniors, and indirectly also for the whole society, if older adults chose the alternative of active ageing and seniors active living of the old age, taking into consideration their own real possibilities and limitations.

Education with different focusing (e.g. cultural-educational, social-educational and professional focusing<sup>3</sup>) is one of suitable tools that can help people to get older (compare, e.g. Aktiv Altern: Rahmenbedingungen und Vorschläge für politisches Handeln, 2002, pp. 28 - 29) and live the senior age in an active way. However, we think that active ageing and active living are also connected with the social involvement of older adults and seniors. This can prevent their social exclusion and other undesirable forms of behaviour. For this reason, in our study we were also dealing with the relationship between the (pre-senior, pro-senior and senior<sup>4</sup>) education, active ageing, active old age and social inclusion of older adults and seniors.

Picture 1: Mutual relationship between social inclusion, active ageing, active old age and education



Source: author's own adaptation

<sup>3</sup> Mentioned division of the subject of geragogy, or focusing of education from the point of view of specializing aspects of andragogy is offered in the work by R. Čornaničová (1998, p. 124).

<sup>4</sup> The quoted division of the subject of geragogy, or education from the point of view of its generation - target orientation is mentioned by R. Čornaničová (1998, p. 124).

At the end of this part of the chapter we will briefly mention the possible ways of social exclusion of older people. R. Čevela, Z. Kalvach and L. Čeledová (2012, p. 111) describe the following ones:

- 1) *pauperization*, i.e. the economic exclusion from the everyday lifestyle and standard of the society,
- 2) *segregation*, i.e. the exclusion of seniors from the mixed-age environment to the environment of the same age, e.g. living in the residences for older people, etc.,
- 3) *ostracism*, i.e. the loss of fellowship with the majoritarian society.

As we have already mentioned, education can play a crucial role in the prevention and solving the problem of social exclusion of adults in the pre-retirement age and seniors. For this reason, it is necessary to pay adequate attention to this education in the theory and practice as well.

## 2 Conclusion

Preparation for active ageing and active old age is an equally important step in the life of people as, for example, the preparation of pre-school children for primary school, or the preparation of graduates from high schools or universities for the labour market. Unfortunately, we have to say that this part of conscious preparation of people is significantly under-evaluated. The practice itself often confirms that many employees in the retirement age have a problem to leave from the labour market and to pay their attention only to themselves, their family and friends. Seniors often perceive their own retirement, when they stop being professionally active, as an empty and meaningless life period because it seldom brings them joy, desire for further development and possibilities of their meaningful participation. However, this is not true. The retirement opens the new "door" for them. The specialised literature calls this phenomenon as the so called second life programme that has to be defined mainly on the basis of knowing the needs of ageing and old people. These needs are related not only to their health condition and material-financial situation, but also to their need of place - home where they feel beloved and respected (Haškovcová, 2010, p. 125).

Education, that is in the centre of our study, has a very significant place in active ageing and active living of the old age. However, we would like to conclude this topic with our opinion that for older adults<sup>5</sup> in the process of active ageing and for seniors in the process of active living their old age *is not important the intellectual performance they will achieve in the education. It is the footprint this education will leave in them that matters the most* (e.g. their old dreams will come true, knowing and meeting new people, social participation, hobbies, relax and self-realization). On the other hand, M. Štílec (2004, p. 14) or Z. Bútorová et al. (2013a, p. 8) point out to the fact that the present time puts more emphasis on the (working) performance, abilities, beauty and youth.

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**Primary Paper Section: A**

**Secondary Paper Section: AM**