

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF SENIORS LIVING IN THE FACILITIES OF SOCIAL SERVICES

^aCTIBOR HATÁR

Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Drážovská 4, 949 74 Nitra, Slovakia
 email: ^achatar@ukf.sk

Abstract: In his work, the author deals with the concept of an educational need with the emphasis on the adult age. He dedicates to the classification of educational needs and factors influencing them and also to the analysis of the educational needs of seniors. In the second chapter, there the author presents the chosen results of his research which was carried out almost in all regions of Slovakia in the facilities for seniors with a sample of 259 respondents. The aim was to find out whether there exists a relationship between the achieved education of institutionalized seniors and their need to further educate themselves and also a relationship between the satisfaction of institutionalized seniors with their own life and their need to further educate themselves. It was proved in the research that the level of achieved education of institutionalized seniors is statistically related to their need to further educate themselves in a significant way. The satisfaction of institutionalized seniors with their own life is statistically not related with their need to further educate themselves.

Keywords: educational needs; motives; seniors; education; satisfaction with life; quality of life; level of education; facilities of social services.

Introduction

People think about the old age and seniors mostly in two basic levels. On one side, there are prevalent such opinions that the ageing of population is a burden for the economic- social system of the state because older people often require a certain care they have not needed until then and, at the same time, they do not have such a working performance that would be reflected in the economics. We do not talk about a big amount of prejudices and myths which depict the old age and seniors in a bad way (more in: Hrozenská et al., 2008, etc.). On the other side, there is a very vivid discussion also about the need of active living of the old age and active ageing which has a legislative support in several strategic documents, e.g. also in *The national programme of active ageing for the years 2014 - 2020*. However, it is necessary to mention that active living of the old age is not only "a matter" of self-sufficient seniors who live in their natural environment but it is also related to the care-requiring seniors living in the facilities of social services. From among a wide range of possibilities that help to achieve the active ageing and the active old age, we have centred our attention exclusively on the education as a professional tool of andragogues.

1 Theoretical bases - educational needs (of seniors), their classification and analysis

The educational needs of adults represent a very often mentioned concept of the andragogical theory and practice. J. Průcha (2014, p. 35) says that „in the attitudes of adults to the education there overlap three psychological characteristic features which can be differentiated with difficulties: motivation - interest - need“. Z. Palán (1997, p. 128) writes about the educational needs that they „arise as a hypothetical state (conscious or unaware) when the individual feels the lack of knowledge or skills that are significant for his/her further existence, for keeping of his/her psychic (and also physical) or social functions“. The educational needs are influenced by values that a man appreciates and, at the same time, they become a motivational factor of his/her activity whereas they are being changed during the course of his/her life (Průcha, 2014, p. 37). Referring to other authors, G. Simon and C. Gerdenitsch (2012, p. 16) mention that the developmental tasks, motivation to education, educational interests, experience, the need of social contact and living conditions of seniors are significantly different from the other age categories. S. Haring and H. Bacher (2014, p. 3) come to the conclusion that the educational needs of older people are heterogeneous, the attitudes to education are manifold and the contents of interests change. Therefore the authors recommend to the educator to find out what educational needs (needs to learn) the senior participants have and subsequently, he/she should connect the process of education / teaching-learning to their biographical

context, personal interests and preferred methodics (how, where and when) (Haring, Bacher, 2014, p. 13).

It is undeniable that with finishing of the working life, the state of dependence and the subsequent institutionalization of the senior, his/her general hierarchy of needs are being changed fundamentally. What was significant for the senior in the past (in the state of his/her physical and psychic functioning and independence), suddenly it becomes insignificant, and vice versa.

Generally it is possible to distinguish at least three kinds of educational needs and these are the *educational needs of individuals* (i.e. the needs of real or potential participants of education which are changeable, they depend on age, gender, educational level etc.), the *educational needs of groups of subjects* (we differentiate the age, professional, socio-economic, ethnic and other groups) and the *educational needs of companies, sectors, national economy, all the society* (these are mainly the requirements of employers transformed into the needs and the national priorities/aims of education on the overall social level) (Průcha, 2014, p. 36-37).

V. Prusáková (2010a, p. 25) writes that by the analysis of the educational needs it is important to know the possible motivation and distinguish *the need to solve a specific situation* from the educational need. While the need to solve a specific situation is based on the fact that a man does not have enough knowledge and he/she cannot solve that situation (the lack of knowledge and skills), in the educational need the main leitmotiv is his/her own need of education in order to cope with with the changing conditions of life. In the practice it means that the education is understood as *a process of saturation of the needs of the man or as a need in itself*.

The reasons of further education mentioned by V. Prusáková (2010a) can be fully applied also to the age category of seniors. It is true that many seniors participate in further education only in order to satisfy their other needs, mostly the social ones but there are also such seniors whose incessant education makes them intrinsically satisfied. Also A. Kobylarek (2010, p. 310) names several factors which motivate seniors to participate in education (in the conditions of the Third-Age Universities). These are the need of personal development, need of social contact, need of feeling important and significant, need to decide and the need of something important in their life. It is evident from the research carried out by S. Haring et al. (2012, p. 35-38) that women-seniors participate in further education due to the following reasons: *they want to stay active, they perceive education as a life necessity, they are interested in the presented topics, social recognition, commitment to fulfil certain tasks (to go out from the house), the educational group and the social solidarity in it, social contacts, personal enrichment, etc.* From the mentioned research it was clear that women-seniors are interested in topics such as the general knowledge and special skills, the old age, gerontology, work with seniors, astronomy, movement, biography, theory of chaos, film, photographing, garden, training of memory, history, health and illness, globalization, handicrafts, childhood and young age, eating, culture, art, psychology, literature, painting and drawing, management, music, nature, new media, pedagogy, anthropology and education of adults, PC, philosophy, politics, presentation technique, directing, travelling, religion and spirituality, rhetoric, singing, languages, dancing, theatre, environment, etc. (Haring et al., 2012, p. 38-46).

When thinking about the importance of education in the life of an institutionalized senior, it is important to take into consideration the whole complex of other needs of an older person. M. Vágnerová (2000, p. 467-470) includes among them different psychic needs such as *the need of stimulation, need of orientation and learning, need of activity, need of emotional security and safety, need of self-realization and the need of open*

future and also the whole complex of needs of the social facility where the seniors live. Therefore the identification of the current (educational) needs, motivation and interests of an older person represent the gateway to the success. It is not possible to educate without knowing who to educate and also without knowing whether the institutionalized senior is really interested in education.

In the end, we would like to add that, when analysing the educational needs of institutionalized seniors, it is important to avoid different mistakes described by V. Prusáková (2010a, p. 20-21) who refers to J. Krajcarová (2004). For example, these mistakes are non-differentiating between the wish and the need, the tendency to evaluate more the past needs than the future needs, the inability to promote the system approach to the education, the assumption that everything is possible with the education or, vice versa, the assumption that it is necessary to educate only when there have been found out some shortcomings.

2 Research of the educational needs of seniors in the facilities of social services

2.1 The project of the research

Regarding the fact that we offer only the selected results of our research in the submitted work, we mention just the following related research questions which we asked at the beginning of our research: 1) Does any statistically important relationship exist between the achieved education of institutionalized seniors and their need to further educate themselves? 2) Does any statistically important relationship exist between the satisfaction of institutionalized seniors with their own life and their need to further educate themselves? From the mentioned research problems there arose the following aims: 1) To find out whether there exists any statistically important relationship exist between the achieved education of institutionalized seniors and their need to further educate themselves. 2) To find out whether there exists any statistically important relationship exist between the satisfaction of institutionalized seniors with their own life and their need to further educate themselves.

The selection of respondents for our research was intentional because we centred exclusively on the clients of a facility for seniors (§ 35 Law No. 448/2008 about Social Services with subsequent amendments), and it was consequently accessible. The total number of respondents was 259, there were 81 men and 178 women from all the regions of Slovakia except Trnava region. 58,68% of respondents were in the life phase of the *old age* (75-89 years), they were followed by the respondents (28,58%) in the phase of the so-called *older age* (60-74 years) and subsequently there were respondents (7,72%) who we already consider to be *long-living* (90+ years) and the smallest group was formed by the respondents aged 45-59 years (5,01%). The mentioned age structure is based on the periodization of the parts of the adult age and all the senior age according to WHO (Čornaničová, 1998, Balogová, 2005).

In order to acquire new empirical data we used a non-standardized questionnaire. The administration of the questionnaire in the facilities was carried out personally by the author/researcher (3 facilities), by the Slovak Post Company (1 facility), colleagues of the author/researcher (2 facilities) and by a family member of the author/researcher (1 facility) in the time period of July - September 2013. The acquired data were evaluated by the methods of the mathematical statistics and logical operations. More detailed findings resulting from this research are presented in his monographic work (Határ, 2014).

2.2 The analysis of the research results

Quite a big attention has currently been paid to the research of senior education in Slovakia and abroad as well. In spite of this fact, the education of seniors in the facilities of social services still remains a marginal and almost unknown area which is being studied mainly in our works. We offer partial results of our

research of senior education in the facilities for seniors (i.e. the former retirement homes for elderly people) in the submitted study.

One of the indicators which we put in the relationship with the need of seniors to educate themselves was their highest achieved education. We divided the respondents into two groups in the following way: 1) seniors with academic education (6,18%) and secondary education with the school-leaving exam (28,19%) and 2) seniors with secondary education without the school-leaving exam (26,64%), basic education (36,29%) and without education (2,70%). These groups were mutually compared by us. The eighth question was aimed on the need of senior clients to further educate themselves. We found out that only 30,89% respondents felt this need. There exist several reasons why the institutionalized seniors were not interested in further education. On one side, the reason lies in health problems and other limitations derived from them which play a decisive if not primary role or there are certain prejudices which are based on the incorrect perception of education only as an obligatory task of young people. The proper setting of the system of residential care often leads the staff, clients and their family members to the conviction that only the health and nursing care connected with satisfying of the physiological needs are the most important things which a senior needs in this phase of life and in these conditions. 65,25% of respondents did not feel the need to further educate themselves and 3,86% of seniors did not answer this question. It was also evident from the research that the health condition (i.e. the health problems) and the age of clients (i.e. the old age) are the key factors which influence their need to further educate themselves.

Z. Palán (1997, p. 128) mentions that there exists a narrow correlation between the achieved level of education and preparation for the profession and the need to further education. Therefore, in the first hypothesis we made the assumption that *the level of achieved education of the institutionalized seniors is statistically significantly related to their need to further educate themselves.*

Table 1: Relationship between the achieved education and the need of seniors to further educate themselves

chi-squared testing statistics	p-value of the test's importance	test's importance
17,7692	0,0001	++

Source: Author's own research

It was proved with the statistical testing that the level of achieved education (between two compared groups) of institutionalized seniors is statistically significantly related to their need to further educate themselves (more than surface of importance 0,01) and on this basis we accept the formulated hypothesis.

We suppose that seniors with a higher level of education where, in the past, belonged the secondary education with a school-leaving exam as well, perceive the further education more as a need in itself than a tool for solving individual problems or a process of satisfying other needs of a senior as also V. Prusáková (2010a, p. 25) mentions in her work. We assume that not all seniors, who achieved only lower or no education, did not have a real potential or aspiration to educate themselves in the past. However, from the practice we know that the possibility of education in the past was not such a usual matter as it is now. Therefore the current need of further education of the institutionalized seniors with a lower level of education can be influenced also by their (un)experience with education in their young age. Functions of education of adults (from the point of view of the relationship to the school education) can be applied to both compared groups of respondents. These functions are described by G. Porubská and E. Ďurdiak (2005, p. 100), and they are *one's own continuing functions* (they are related to the satisfying of the intellectual needs of the senior, exceeding the programme of the school, they are usually connected with the participation in the public activities, with the solving of personal and other problems etc.) and *the substitutional function* (it is

related to the acquisition of a certain level of education and saturation of educational needs in the adulthood/senior age).

Regarding the relationship to the seniors, there is a frequent discussion about the quality of their life (e.g. Balogová, 2005; Heřmanová, 2012; Escuder-Mollón, Cabedo, (eds.), 2014; Határ, 2014 etc.). Satisfaction and well-being in different areas of life are generally understood as common denominators of the majority of definitions of the quality of life and, at the same time, they represent the key elements of the indicators of the individual quality of life (Tokárová, 2002, p. 26). We found out in the research that 76,45% of respondents were satisfied with their own life, 19,69% of seniors were not satisfied with their own life and 3,86% of respondents did not answer the question. J. Džuka (2004, p. 42) describes more precisely the relationship between the quality of life and the subjective well-being. In general, he differentiates three constructs and these are *the objective quality of life* (i.e. the objective conditions of life of the individual), *the subjective quality of life* (i.e. individually assessed conditions of life of the individual) and *the subjective well-being* (conditions of life evaluated with the emotional system). M. Zimermanová (2013, p. 23-27) experimentally verified the influence of the cooperative programme of the educational character, which was created by her, on the quality of life of the institutionalized seniors, on the frequency of positive emotions and non-emotional states and the frequency of negative emotions and non-emotional states of seniors. She found out that the programme she had suggested, did not improve the quality of life of the institutionalized seniors nor the frequency of positive emotions and non-emotional states SEHP, but it decreased the frequency of their negative emotions and non-emotional states SEHP. According to the author, the results of her research could be influenced by the external non-tested variables.

Z. Bútorová et al. (2013, p. 305) mention that the level of satisfaction of people aged 45 - 64 years with their own life situation „cannot be perceived as a true reflection of the objective state of social and economic conditions of life, but it expresses mainly the personal definition of the life situation of the individual“. The authors also say that „education is a quite important factor. Generally it is valid that more educated people are more satisfied with their life. This influence is reflected the most significantly in their evaluation of the working life as well as in the general feeling from their life, the satisfaction with their social life and their participation in the public life“ (Bútorová et al., 2013, p. 305).

Based on these mentioned facts we assumed that *the satisfaction of the institutionalized seniors with their own life will be statistically significantly related to their need to further educate themselves.*

Table. 2: Relationship between the satisfaction with their life and the need of seniors to further educate themselves

chi-squared testing statistics	p-value of the test's importance	test's importance
2,8534	0,2401	-

Source: Author's own research

It was proved with the statistical testing that the satisfaction (as an indicator of the quality of life) that was felt by the institutionalized seniors regarding their own life is not statistically related to their need to further educate themselves (since the level of importance is higher than 0,05) and based on this fact we reject this hypothesis.

We also asked the respondents why they are not satisfied with their own life. From their answers, which we processed, it is evident that *unfavourable health condition, limited mobility and immobility, loneliness, bad relationships with their roommates and family-related reasons* caused their dissatisfaction with their own life. We perceive the mentioned reasons as objective ones because, in the longer term it was also proved by the checking of the need of seniors to further educate themselves that the health condition (health problems) and age (the old age) play a very

important role in this matter. However, there appeared unusual reasons as well, such as, for example, *not enough cigarettes, the death of a son or the impossibility to go wherever the client wants to go*. In spite of the fact that there was not verified any connection between the satisfaction of seniors with their own life and their need to further educate themselves, it does not mean that the educational could not influence the life of the institutionalized seniors in a positive way, just on the contrary. It was also proved with the research findings of M. Lenhardtová et al. (2015, p. 174) who tested the influence of the co-educational cooperative programme on institutionalized children and seniors. They found out that the general satisfaction of the senior clients was increased after the application of this programme.

Instead of the conclusion

„However, the education of seniors is not and cannot be primarily oriented on the professional preparation, but it fulfils a whole range of not less important functions“ (Haškovcová, 2010, p. 129). R. Čornaničová (1998, p. 68-70) mentions the preventive, anticipative, rehabilitation, adaptation, reinforcing, communicative, compensation, activating, relaxing, cultural-cultivating, social-psychological and intergenerationally understanding functions. It has also been proved by the research that the educational activities have a very significant meaning for the institutionalized seniors. By means of these activities, the seniors frequently *avoid inaction and boredom* (46,72%), *they take a rest and relax* (28,57%), *they communicate and share their experience* (27,41%). Thanks to the education, more than 23% of seniors *keep their body and mind fit*, almost 23% of respondents *broaden their horizons of knowledge* by means of education and almost 21% of respondents *participate in overall social activities and they do not think about their own problems* thank to the educational activities (Határ, 2014, p. 50). Regarding this fact, we highly recommend so that the education becomes an obligatory service which will be provided in the facilities of social services to their senior clients by means of qualified andragogues.

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