

## PEOPLE OF THE THIRD AGE AS SUBJECTS OF LIFELONG LEARNING<sup>1</sup>

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***People of the third age as subjects of lifelong learning:** The education of people of the third age is most accurately defined by the term "Gerontology" (by Greek Geron - old man). By using this term, this particular category of learners can be considered in three directions: what does education mean for the lives of people at that age, what is the importance of lifelong learning, and what is the meaning of learning about the person.*

*The functions that educate people from the third age are the following:*

- Preventive function - it provides risk mitigation or adverse circumstances in the preparation for old age.
- Oriented - Provides acquisition of knowledge by the individual through self-activity and problem solving.
- Protective - Old people learn on the basis of their own experience or the experience of their peers how to include safeguards against external and internal adverse factors.

- Compensator - Provides natural aging.

- Rehabilitation - helps people adapt to physical, mental and social changes that occur after termination of work.

- Adaptation - the training is aimed at rationalizing the new opportunities for continuing active activity in the third age.

- Self-development - old people, driven by their interests and needs, engage in activities and communicate with others, thus remaining active longer.

- Integration - are expressed in the transition from isolation to creative, labor and motor activity.

*Intergenerational - Provides interaction with other generations, tolerance and dialogue.*

*The economic and social changes that are taking place in the world and in Europe require a new approach to the education of older people. Through it, they will preserve their ability for social adaptation and integration.*

*The main criterion in the education of the elderly people is personal development in order to change their quality of life, preserve the active life position and increase the level of information literacy. By retiring, people in the age group experienced difficulty adapting to the changes in their quality of life. They close themselves, feel anxious, lower their communication. Educational institutions can play an important role in supporting successful aging. The cognitive interest of the elderly is the strongest motivation to learn. Secondly, there are new opportunities for inclusion and social inclusion.*

*The aging process can be crucial for everyone Individual because it involves work changes (retirement), family, society, health problems requiring adjustments to perceptions and structuring our own lives. These are psychological, physical and social Challenges that can lead to a decline in the quality of life if the individual does not deal with them in the right way. The post-retirement period offers a chance for a person to take advantage of new learning opportunities, interest activities, sports.*

*The motivation of people of the third age for education is their desire to Learn to know more about a topic or subject they are showing Curiosity; To know more about modern society and its History; To understand modern society and to keep up with the changes, To avoid isolation, and remain active.*

**Keywords:** Education, People of the third age, lifelong learning

### INTRODUCTION

Lifelong learning is any purposeful learning activity that serves to continually improve people's knowledge, abilities and competence. It is also seen as a way of thinking, encouraging each individual to realize their own need for the continuous acquisition of new knowledge, skills and competencies. Of course, as a systemic process, lifelong learning focuses primarily on the individual and his / her personal and professional development needs.

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## EXPLANATION

The education of people of the third age is most accurately defined by the term "Gerontology"

(from Greek Geron - old man). By using this term, this specific category of learners can be considered in three directions: what does education mean for the lives of the education of people of the third age is most accurately defined by the term "Gerontology" (from Greek Geron - old man). By using this term, this specific category of learners can be considered in three directions: what does education mean for the lives of people at that age, what is the importance of lifelong learning, and what is the meaning of learning about the person.

The functions that educate people from the third age are the following:

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- Intergenerational - provides interaction with other generations, tolerance and dialogue. (Kononigina, 2006)

The Memorandum of the European Commission on Lifelong Learning (Lisbon, 2000) also has as its main objective the creation in Europe of a comprehensive strategy for continuous education and learning. There are two equally important reasons for the practical implementation of lifelong learning: moving Europe towards a knowledge-based society and economy and the complex social and political world in which Europeans live. It is education, in its broadest sense, that is the key to learning and understanding how to meet these challenges in order to raise people's civil awareness, realize the potential for employment in all areas of life, adaptability, social integration and personal development. (Vasileva, 2015)

The Memorandum on Lifelong Learning sets out six key messages:

1. New basic skills for all: acquiring and renewing the skills needed to actively participate in the knowledge society. This requires ensuring a common and permanent access to learning. Particularly important are the work with information technology, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurial spirit and social skills.

2. Increased investment in human resources.

3. Innovations in teaching and learning: development of effective teaching and learning methods and their implementation in the processes of continuous and wide-ranging education.

4. Knowledge assessment - to significantly improve the ways of understanding and evaluating participation in the educational process and its outcomes - especially in non-formal and formal education.

5. Reconsideration of advisory functions (information and guidance) - providing easy access to high-quality information and advice on the opportunities for education and training of all age groups.

6. Bringing education closer to home: creating opportunities for continuous learning as close as possible to the home of learners.

According to the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, lifelong learning is the result of active citizenship and a precondition for active participation in public life. It can help in shaping the personality and in understanding life. Through formal and non-formal education, people of all ages develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical and professional qualifications, or apply them in new directions, thus meeting their needs and the needs of society. (<http://www.un.org>)

One of the main challenges faced by education systems continues to be to guarantee and respect the right of everyone to education. The economic and social changes that are taking place in the world and in Europe require a new approach to the education of older people. Through it, they will preserve their ability for social adaptation and integration.

The main criterion in the education of the elderly is personal development in order to change their quality of life, preserve the active life position and increase the level of information literacy. When retiring, people in this age group have difficulty adapting to the changes in their quality of life. They close themselves, feel anxiety, lower their communication. Educational institutions can play an important role in supporting successful aging. The cognitive interest of the elderly is the strongest motivation for learning. Secondly, there are new opportunities for inclusion and social inclusion.

In Europe the beginning of the theoretical understanding of the essence and role of the training of the elderly people was introduced in the 70s of the 20th century. During this period a large number of public unions and national universities arose. Together with third-age universities, there are also many associations and movements of retirees and elderly people.

In 1974, an international association of universities for elderly people was established. It brings together more than 130 establishments in Argentina, UK, Spain, Italy, Canada, Poland, USA, France, Sweden and Switzerland. Similar work is being done in Japan, Romania, China, Ghana, etc., where the corresponding institutions are not members of this movement. The International Association of Universities for the Third Age has been officially recognized by the UN, UNESCO, the European Council and the European Parliament and has a permanent secretariat (headquarters) in Toulouse and an information and research center in Belgium (Petrov, 2004).

The goals that universities set for the elderly are: to direct people to a healthy lifestyle, to acquire skills to plan and organize their free time, to participate in projects, to use their acquired life experiences in the upbringing of the growing generation.

The peculiarities of universities for the elderly (third age) include the provision of mental and physical development of old people and the mitigation of the processes of aging; encouraging social contacts with both their peers and those from other age groups; democratization of the education system on the path of involving those groups that were previously ignored; strengthening self-consciousness and self-activity of the old; awakening to more active participation in life and engaging in various types and forms of community service on a voluntary basis. The approach to solving these tasks concerns the content of the activity, the form of its organization, its status, management and financing (Vasileva, 2015).

The solution of the problems of adapting the education and training system to the aging of the population and the need to improve the quality of life of the elderly people are also included in the National Demographic Development Strategy of the Population in the Republic of Bulgaria (2012-2030). The concept is aimed at developing a new National Lifelong Learning Strategy to increase participation in lifelong learning activities for all age groups of the population.

It is envisaged to step up measures aimed at mastery of information and communication technologies as a means of improving the possibility of a knowledge society, access to education and training for the elderly to enable them to remain active for longer and longer term to participate in public life (<http://www.strategy.bg>).

Among the areas of impact in the National Lifelong Learning Strategy for the period 2014-2020 are the development of opportunities for non-formal learning of elderly people after the end of their professional career. It aims at the end of the period to become a country that creates the

necessary conditions for a fully creative and professional realization of the person in which the access to various and qualitative forms of lifelong learning has become a reality for all its citizens. Improving knowledge and competencies is no longer seen as the right or privilege of the younger ones; it is the right of all (<http://mon.bg>).

Through learning for the elderly, intergenerational learning (and sharing) can also be developed in order to preserve and share the accumulated knowledge and experience from the older to the younger generation, which will also contribute to improving the communication between them.

People of the third age as subjects of lifelong learning have the following characteristics: they are trained and qualified, but wish to acquire competencies in other spheres. Their motivation to participate in the learning process is crucial.

The term "subject" derives from Latin (Latin Subjectum) and means an active and knowledgeable, conscious and willing person "(Filosofskij enciklopedicheski slovar). In this sense, the person who is active in the process of interaction and interaction with the other subjects and objects in the social environment is accepted as a subject. Looking at people of the third age as subjects of the learning process, subjectivity is expressed in providing opportunities for self-government, self-evaluation, self-correction, self-development and self-improvement.

An important condition for the realization of the subjective position of the students is the creation of a stimulating and supportive educational environment, which will provide them with more freedom, the right of opinion and choice. In practice, this means realizing an interactive learning environment characterized by:

- increased student activity;
- Individual selection of learners in terms of didactic resources, time and rhythm of learning;
- use of interactive methods and techniques of work;
- changed roles of the subjects of training;
- specific organization of time and space - individual and group work; changing activities in logical order; maximum use of display space;
- applying different forms of control;
- maintaining a positive and stimulating microclimate;
- continuous feedback between the teacher and the learner (Gurova and Collective, 2015).

The learning process adapts to the peculiarities of the elderly, taking into account their educational needs.

Educational needs - this is a need to master knowledge, skills, habits and qualities, supposed competencies that need to be mastered by adult learners to solve vital issues (getting general, secondary, higher education, acquiring or improving professional habits, maintaining and improving health, participation in social life, personality development, etc.)

- Determining the volume and nature of life experience
- Clarification of all conditions for the professional, domestic and social activity of learners;
- Determining the possibilities for using the learning process of the learners / presence of certain pre-training, practical habits and skills /;
- Determination of the physiological and psychological characteristics of the trainees;
- Determining the cognitive and learning style of the trainees;

2. Forming learners of sustainable motivation for learning on the path of creating a prognostic functional model of competence that needs to be achieved in the process of adult learning in order to change their life situation (Vasileva, 2015)

## CONCLUSION

According to the states of the European Union, people of the third age are valuable to society as sources of knowledge, professional experience. Their participation in different educational forms changes their way of life, provides them with the opportunity to communicate and acquire new knowledge for a meaningful life. Third-age education is a way of preserving the ability of people to socially adapt and integrate in society, and to changing conditions in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic life. The state policy on lifelong learning in the context of the theme of active aging ensures the provision of quality education and training services, as well as the opportunity for all, regardless of age, to meet their learning needs ([www.strategy.bg](http://www.strategy.bg) / Strategic Documents).

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