

THE THIRD SHIFT

Andragogical Reflections on the *@ktywny Senior Project*

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@ktywny Senior Project

Edited by
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Introduction

"The Third Shift. Andragogical Reflections on the @ktywny Senior Project" is a monograph devoted to the numerous aspects of senior education, all the more valuable, since it is based on experience. Not only does it constitute an example of good practice, but it is also characterised by a scientific approach to the presented information. Representatives of diverse circles and social groups – among others, employees and doctoral studies students of the academies of Wrocław (University of Wrocław, University School of Physical Education in Wrocław, Wrocław Medical University), employees of Lower Silesian non-governmental organisations, and, last but not least, the seniors who took part in the project – have contributed to the writing of the present book. The seniors themselves are the authors of the title "The Third Shift" which is to symbolise people of advanced age, the third generation, as well as the start of seniors' active participation in social life.

The book has been divided into four parts – I. On the activation of seniors, II. Computer skills training for seniors, III. Health education of seniors, IV. The project activity for seniors – depending on the subject of the articles to be found therein.

An article by Dr Walentyna Wnuk devoted to the numerous aspects of the notion of the activity of seniors begins the first part. The author – a holder of a doctoral degree in humanities, the creator and an employee of many years of the University of the Third Age at the University of Wrocław, whose experience cannot be overestimated – directs her attention and reflection to the opportunities and the limitations of the activity of seniors in Lower Silesia, with her conclusions founded on the conducted research. Mgr Joanna Ryłko elaborates further on the subject in her article on group communication among seniors. J. Ryłko as a participant of the @ktywny Senior project conducted the workshops and the research that constituted the basis of her Master's thesis. She has also decided to present the results of the research as an example of a combination of good practice and scientific approach. The description of the "Learning from life and one's own biography" workshops is characterised by the features of good practice; it is presented by a student of doctoral studies in the Institute of Pedagogics at the University of Wrocław – Magdalena Wnuk-Olenicz. Thanks to the detailed description of the classes conducted complemented with teaching materials used during the workshops we are allowed to enter the world of seniors and their memories. The article by Grzegorz Mendyka – a leading expert in genealogy – takes one on an even further

journey; during the project the author took seniors back to their family past, at the same time teaching them how to construct intergenerational relationships on the basis of the search for family roots. The first part is concluded with a text about the foreign language education of seniors written by on the basis of the experience gained during the English language course conducted by inż Marek Gulanowski. The author describes the specific character of the process of the learning of seniors, the methodology employed, and the forms and contents of teaching. At the same time, the areas that require a teacher running the classes for seniors to display not only his linguistic, but also communicative competences are discussed.

The second part, devoted to the computer skills training course for seniors, includes three long articles. In the first of them Dr Ewa Jurczyk-Romanowska – a lecturer in the Institute of Pedagogics, a chairman of Stowarzyszenie AVEC (AVEC association) that was one of the organisers of the *@ktywny Senior* project, and the editor of this book – presents an analysis of the motivational process of seniors resulting in their participation in computer skills training courses. Having conducted research before and during the course she described not only the motivations of people of advanced age, but their expectations and demands, as well. Further, Mgr Joanna Golonka – a doctoral studies student in the Institute of Pedagogics – describes the conditions of organisation of the beginner level computer skills training courses aimed at seniors. The author prepared the substantive aspect of the first part of the training course organised as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project, which makes the presented experiences all the more valuable. The continuation – the advanced level computer skills training course and introduction to the world of the internet – was taken care of by Mgr Jacek Gulanowski, also a student of doctoral studies in the Institute of Pedagogics. In his publication he puts emphasis on the advantages and the risks of the virtual dimension, providing also a valuable description of the new reality opening up to the seniors. Both of the articles are complemented with the training course curriculum and the exemplary teaching materials developed by the course instructors, who are the authors of the second part of the book, as well.

The third part, in turn, is devoted to health education of seniors. It constitutes a smooth transition to the medical paradigm presented by doctors – Jacek Stankowski – with his accessible description, bordering on popular science, of the ailments of the old age – and Anna Żyszczynska, who elaborates on the medical examinations carried out before and throughout the *@ktywny Senior* project. Moving on to the further texts we observe a certain substitution of the medical approach by a humanities one, with the article on the subject of physical activity in therapy and prevention of old age illnesses situated in between and prepared by a team representing the University School of Physical Education (AWF) in Wrocław – Dr Iwona Krysiak-Zielonka and Mgr Justyna Mazurek. Further representatives of AWF – Dr Marta Koszczyc and Mgr Łukasz Koper – creators of the University of the Third Age at their alma mater – discuss the seniors' attitude towards health

and its connection with their lifestyles. In their article they describe a philosophy of health and the holistic approach to health education of seniors. The third part is concluded by the article of Dr Małgorzata Synowiec-Piłat who discusses the activity of seniors in the context of health promotion, with a description of the Polish reality and examples of the practices of other countries constituting the basis of her analysis.

The last part introduces quite a different atmosphere, dealing with analysis of the opportunities of organising further projects that seniors could benefit from and the advantages and disadvantages of the organisation of the *@ktywny Senior* project. A review and structure of European Union sources of funds for projects aimed at seniors are described by Dr Ewa Jurczyk-Romanowska – this time working in her primary field of scientific interest, law – and Mgr Natalia Romanowska, an experienced practitioner in acquiring grant-aid as part of Operational Programme Innovative Economy and Operational Programme Human Capital. In the further part, Mgr Anna Dobrzycka – with her detailed scrutiny of the finances and the budget of the *@ktywny Senior* project – and Mgr Anna Bressa – discussing risk management in the context of the project in question – present the results of their research and the conclusions drawn from their analyses. Discussing both of these subject appears to be of crucial importance from the perspective of the so-called good practice, because their organisation seemed to be the weakest point of the entire initiative. Not only do both of the authors criticise the mistakes made, but – what is essential – they propose a number of solutions to be introduced to improve the future actions aimed at seniors, as well. The fourth part and the book is concluded with a report of the *@ktywny Senior* project supervisor – Marian Ferenc – consisting in a recapitulation of the actions undertaken as part of the project.

While preparing the present book an effort was made to put equal emphasis on the scientific character of the research and the reports and on the presentation of the practical aspects of the implemented initiative. That is why each part is complemented with a selection of lesson plans that can be used again in the education of people of advanced age and that may constitute a source of inspiration for further educational initiatives aimed at seniors.

In order to provide the description of the *@ktywny Senior* project with a more realistic, substantial and easily identifiable character photos and information about the authors and organisers of the initiative who are also the authors of the articles are included in the book. The photos constitute a graphical conclusion of the first three parts to serve as proof that the organising of such projects is not only a realisable initiative, but also a source of great satisfaction.

Ewa Jurczyk-Romanowska



PART I
On the activation of seniors

Dr Walentyna Wnuk

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A gerontologist, a scholar of social gerontology, and an academic teacher at the University of Wrocław. Head of the University of the Third Age (U3A) at the University of Wrocław in 1997–2006. Currently an adviser on the senior citizen matters to the president of the city of Wrocław. She was the head of Wrocławska Rada ds. Seniorów (Wrocław council for senior citizen matters) of the first term. Dr Walentyna Wnuk has worked with seniors for many years and was one of the precursors of the U3A. In 2006 Dr Wnuk was awarded the Złoty Medal Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego (the gold medal of the University of Wrocław), as well as the Medal Edukacji Narodowej (the medal of national education), and the Nagroda Wrocławia (the prize of Wrocław) for her work for the necessitous.

Promotion of active living among seniors. The essence – the aims – the opportunities and the limitations

Summary: The author provides a comprehensive description of the problem of promotion of active living among seniors based on research and professional experience. Promotion of active living among seniors is to be understood as a set of actions aimed at mitigating the process of ageing with the simultaneous development of competences necessary in senior life. The activity is considered "developmental living", regardless of its scope. The causes of inactivity and the opportunities for stimulation of activity are discussed, as well. The active lives of the U3A students serve as examples.

Key words: Promotion of active living, activity, models of being active, developmental activity, social exclusion.

To be active as a senior is not only to enjoy life and leisure time, but also to undertake the responsibilities of a participant in the life of the community: a district, a city, an association, and other people, in order to preserve cultural heritage.

[O. Czerniawska, *Style życia w starości*]

Introduction

I would like to strongly oppose the popular idea about the supposed inactive attitude of seniors that denies the need for their activity. Many of them do, in fact, believe that avoiding physical and intellectual activity are to ensure a long and healthy old age. Research leads to a contrary conclusion. An influential basic cultural tendency to value active living is to be taken into account. Activity is, therefore, a socially appreciated value that meets the need for a proper old age.

I believe that everyone feels the best when living in a work (a regular effort adapted to one's abilities) – leisure time (rest) routine. That is why it is necessary to provide the seniors with opportunities for sensible activity allowing them to be helpful and needed. Therefore, activity constitutes a lifelong emotional and social necessity, including old age. Seniors are happy to be able to undertake other activities in place of the professional and family ones.

The perception old age as a time of inactivity, inability, lack of chances of self-fulfilment, and weakening of intellect is slowly changing. Old age can be a positive stage in life, provided that seniors have the opportunity to lead active, creative lives. It is obvious that with age we are able to undertake less tasks. However, there is a great individual diversity. It is a popular belief that one's activity depends first and foremost on acquired routines and one's system of values. The need to participate in life does not change with age, if it is not limited by physically debilitating illness; those with no such needs, however, become even more inactive. That is why seniors can choose between activity as a realisation of their natural needs and inactivity, negation, or stagnation.

The noblest of ideas introduced in *Ustawa o pomocy społecznej* (social assistance act) that has taken effect on 12.03.2004¹⁾ is the idea of promoting active living among the residents of the DPS²⁾. The strategy constitutes a correct answer to the question: what to do to allow the residents of the DPS to lead more active lives. It is to encompass the aspects: 1. self-sufficiency, 2. establishing interpersonal contacts, 3. participation in organised activities, mainly occupational therapy.

¹⁾ Ustawa z dnia 12 marca 2004 r. o pomocy społecznej, Dz.U. 2004.64.593 – social assistance act introduced on 12.03.2004 with subsequent changes.

²⁾ DPS – Dom Pomocy Społecznej (nursing homes, entirely or partially funded by the public authorities).

The research conducted under my supervision by students of andragogy indicates that the idea has not been implemented. The creation of new models of care requires years of work of teams of care assistants. It is necessary for the teams to include educated and well-trained people, whereas nowadays the care-assistants are often ill-prepared.

To conclude, it is to be assumed that activity constitutes a lifelong emotional and social necessity. **Promotion of active living among seniors is to be understood as a set of actions aimed at mitigating the process of ageing with the simultaneous development of competences necessary in senior life.** In order for the process to be effective the following are necessary:

- ❖ A clearly defined aim of the activities,
- ❖ Addressing genuine needs,
- ❖ Changes in attitude,
- ❖ Demonstrating new opportunities.

The social sciences theories confirming such understanding of the promotion of being active are the "theory of activity" in the field of gerontology, "creative old age model", "old age as a task", "productive old age", "lifelong development theory", "the idea of animation", "lifestyle as education", "developmental crises theory", or "the dynamic old age model".

Do the seniors need to be active?

Yes, if they value lifelong development according to the aforementioned theories related to positive ageing. It is the essence of maturing in humanity.

Development (developmental living) is an opportunity that one can take advantage of to age positively and with dignity. Making this choice leads to being active. That is why it is necessary to broaden one's knowledge and experience, to become involved in various activities, which provides a chance for a better understanding of the world around us. Stagnation leads to slow deterioration, loss of self-sufficiency, and, as a result, to exclusion. Being inactive means losing creative opportunities. **Active life of seniors in a developmental life.** Taking such attitude has various implications. There is no activity without development and no development without activity. Contemporary lifelong education is a part of one's social and cultural environment and it is no longer an exclusive field of the standard educational organizations. Nowadays socialising is considered yet another element of informal education.

Is developmental activity actually necessary for seniors?

- I have no doubt that the answer should be a "yes", because of the seniors need of:
- new experiences,
 - being helpful and feeling needed,
 - revising their knowledge,

- social relationships,
- self-sufficiency,
- creativity and admiration,
- independent problem solving,
- ageing in dignity,
- realising childhood dreams,
- finding a meaning of life (reflection on life),
- improving skills and competences,
- participation in social and cultural life,
- bridging the generation gap,
- staying young (learning makes younger),
- staying fit,
- staying healthy to live longer,
- happiness,
- increasing self-esteem,
- acceptance of others,
- exchange of feelings and emotions,
- overcoming loneliness and the “feeling of emptiness”.

Through the realisation of the idea of lifelong education developmental activity encompasses four areas of activity (according to the standards proposed by E. Faure³⁾):

- learning in order to perceive,
- learning in order to take action,
- learning in order to live with others,
- learning in order to be.

These are the four pillars of lifelong learning.

Nowadays, developmental life is not available to the young exclusively. The illiterate today are those unwilling to study, learn, and break old negative habits⁴⁾.

Activity, therefore, allows for the realisation of most of human needs. However, from among the activities within the reach of one's abilities one needs to choose those that one values the most and those that win recognition and bring satisfaction.

What is activity?

There are numerous definitions of activity:

- in biology – actions undertaken to sustain bodily functions,
- in psychology – an individual trait,
- in gerontology – a set of actions hindering the process of ageing,
- in andragogy – a human development factor,
- in medicine – illness prevention.

³⁾ E. Faure, *Uczyć się, aby być*, 1975.

⁴⁾ A. Toffler, *Trzecia fala*, Poznań 1997.

Therefore, being active is contemporarily considered a synonym a being alive, a crucial condition for development, a basis for the treatment of various illnesses, an opportunity for creative self-expression, and a regulation of social relations. It is a prophylactic endeavour, allowing for individual helpfulness taking into account the abilities, tastes, and habits; it is also essential to age with dignity.

In psychology of late maturity the "psychophysical" (i.e. exercise), "psychosocial" (social relations), "identity-related" (i.e. individual, the reflection on life), "metaphysical" (i.e. spiritual, with transgression as an act of going beyond oneself) forms of activity are considered. One has an opportunity to be active in all these aspects. Being active is essential in a certain philosophy of ageing, as proposed by gerontologists. It constructs a living space that becomes limited with age. It allows for the realisation of the seniors' potential (e.g. through voluntary work). It always constitutes a basis for retaining self-sufficiency and resourcefulness and, most certainly, mutual help in building a civil society. Being active provides a chance to challenge the negative stereotype of old age – a harmful product of contemporary society (the cult of youth). Therefore, all activities beneficial to physical health as well as emotional and social wellbeing constitute problems of interest to us. That is why self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, control of the social and cultural environment and establishing life goals constitute predictors of positive ageing along with physical health.

Being active as a senior becomes a decisive factor in defining the shape and size of one's living space. Living space is constructed by individual activity as well as social environment, i.e. the world of others, the community, the neighbourhood, and the family.

Presently, a major limitation of the living space of seniors is observed. It is a great problem, because seniors' social age is an expression of their social situation. Therefore, ageing is also a process triggered by a reaction to what is going on in the immediate environment of seniors, with the reach, the character and hierarchy of their social activity changing. In other words, seniors need to adapt to the new social and cultural situation. Participation of seniors in the life of the community is of crucial importance, because it allows for the benefitting from their potential, the prevention of alienation ("social death") and provides a chance to be active.

Being active, therefore, prevents social exclusion, provides working means, allows one to find a support group, and makes it possible to implement "senior to senior" counselling. Being active is also an indicator of the quality of a senior's life. It is necessary to be active in order to live in dignity; without it, life becomes merely a state of vegetation.

The motto of American gerontologists is: the aim of being active in old age is not just to add years to the lifespan, but to add life to the years⁵⁾. That implies the prolonging of the "youthful", active old age and impeding becoming senile,

⁵⁾ Z.R. Ryn, *Starość otwiera nam oczy*, „Charaktery” 1999, Issue 10.

disabled, unengaged, and passive. It is based on encouraging interests and hobbies and engaging in activities that bring satisfaction.

How to be active?

Intellectual, social, civic, cultural, religious, physical, home and family, professional, club, artistic, individual, tourist, hobby, internet, caretaking, and voluntary work are the forms of activity to be taken into consideration.

Multiple categories of seniors' activities are discussed in reference books. Therefore, the number of opportunities is great. "Everyday activities" (daily routine), "continued activities" (reading the newspapers, going for a walk), and "new activities" (learning to use computers, taking care of other seniors) are mentioned among others.

"Recreation and hobbies" (gardening, sports, and interests), "receptive activities" (watching TV and listening to the radio, using the internet), and "integration activities" (education and training, social life, community life: seniors' clubs, U3A⁶, associations, charity work) are discussed.

Among the activity categories "formal activities" (work within the associations), "informal activities" (consisting mainly of relationships with family members, friends, and neighbours), and "individual activities" (including watching TV, using the internet, reading, artistic development, writing diaries and letters) are specified.

Directions of activities are also to be indicated:

- for oneself (learning foreign languages),
- for the group (working with the local government),
- for the community (cooperation the DPS),
- for the family (taking care of grandchildren).

The activities undertaken are to address actual interests while at the same time remaining socially appreciated.

Hardly at all does the research⁷ that I have conducted among the seniors of Lower Silesia (mostly inhabitants of villages and small towns) confirm the vast number of opportunities to be active. The research results confirm the previously indicated passive lifestyle of seniors, with 90% of the elderly taking part in no social organisations whatsoever.

Only 4% of the surveyed declared taking active part in the works of social organisations – these were mostly men living in cities. Such low activity in associations is supplemented with work in church organisations, which are supposedly tailored for the seniors exclusively, with 3% of the surveyed active in this area. These were

⁶) U3A – University of the Third Age.

⁷) The research based on my professional interests and fulfilled functions related to the living standards of seniors in Lower Silesia conducted in 2007 by Dolnośląska Rada ds. Seniorów (Lower Silesian council for senior citizen matters) with the Marszałek Województwa Dolnośląskiego (Marshal of the Lower Silesia Voivodship). I was a co-initiator and a co-author of the resulting report, available on the Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Dolnośląskiego (Marshall Office of the Lower Silesia Voivodship) website.

mostly women living in villages. Only about 3,6% of the surveyed take part in organised activities, such as those of the so-called "seniors' clubs". These were relatively young men and women. Lack of access to such establishments in many towns may explain the low attendance.

What about the social relationships of the seniors? "Relationships with children and family members" were by far the most popular, with 50% of the answers indicating an everyday character of such contacts (due, probably, to living under one roof). 23% of the surveyed mentioned maintaining such contacts a few times a week. Single contacts in a week were declared in 3% of the answers, with a similar percentage indicating no contacts at all.

Despite being the second most popular form (with over 12% of the answers), "seeing friends" did not prove as important as had been expected. Yet, contacts of that sort allow for an exchange of services (mutual help) and support, while distracting from the monotony of everyday life. "Seeing social workers" constitutes a supplement of the possible social relationships. Only 2,5 % of the surveyed see social workers every day, while over 82% have never maintained such contacts. It seems that the need for social workers in the researched districts is low – is it an outcome of the lack of information about such opportunities?

What about "help of healthcare workers"? Only 0,5% of the surveyed seek daily medical advice, with over 20% admitting to having no contact with healthcare institutions. 8% of the seniors have appointments once a year, and 34% a few times a year or a month. The seniors are said to have "taken over" the healthcare institutions; however, the research results presented indicate that that is hardly the case. The availability of medical services, especially the specialised ones, is to be considered hereby.

Finally, we come to "seeing a priest" – 42% of the surveyed mentioned a single yearly contact (probably the Christmas pastoral visits), with 2% of the surveyed meeting a priest every day, and 20% indicating a lack of such contacts.

Are the surveyed interested in "further professional activity", which they have often lost the opportunity for (e.g. because of early retirement)? Over 46% of seniors answered positively to a possible continuation of work. EU standards postulate to encourage the elderly to become professionally active again (which includes voluntary work); however, 53,1% of the surveyed are not interested.

What models of being active are observed among seniors?

I will relate to the experience that I have gained as head of U3A at the University of Wrocław. It needs to be emphasized that the dynamically developing Universities of the Third Age may serve as examples of the actual opportunities related to the discussed problem. Therefore, the **models of being active observed** among the seniors at the U3A are:

- being highly active – participation in numerous activities organised by the U3A,
- making an effort to be active professionally, making the skills as e.g. foreign language teachers, therapists, lawyers, nurses, literature teachers, proofreaders, artists (mostly women) helpful,

- focusing on a single activity – a single, favourite area: singing in a choir, comedy, a foreign language, working with the local government,
- contemplation, reflection on life and its analysis, reconstructing personal experience, while withdrawing from other activities: the participants of workshops and seminars,
- leading, confirming the importance of being helpful and needed, with a strong awareness of responsibility for the U3A: members of the local government, voluntary workers, team and section leaders (mostly women, too),
- looking to receive the help and care from the immediate environment required to remain active: members of the mutual help groups,
- the "stars" with powerful personalities, not always cooperative within the groups, with the need to emphasize individual presence at the U3A, event organisers.

Each of the models requires a different type of help and psychological support and the development plans should vary.

In relation to the models of being active "the reformer", "the observer", "the devoted consumer", "the self-realising" (individual participation plan), "the leader", "the pretentious", "the inactive", and "the star" types can be discussed.

What are the reasons for being inactive?

With efficiency constituting the highest value for the modern man, life of the elderly is difficult. A selection is made into the "better" and the "worse" citizens, according to the division into the professionally active and the inactive. Yet, there are many opportunities of constructing the so-called efficiency of an individual.

The cult of youth is a serious barrier, with its grotesque form – the "youthful seniors". It is a form of rebellion against old age and passing away.

The rapid social and cultural changes require the ability to adapt, which is a typical feature of youth. Regardless of numerous technological advantages of modern civilisation, the seniors remain computer illiterate. The fear of growing old, not nearly as apparent in different times and cultures, is increasing every day.

Being inactive and passive attitude are results of a lack of individuality and conservative lifestyle. On the other hand, one may notice that many seniors nowadays are conscious of these facts and try hard to be as full of energy, as professionally successful, and even as good-looking as the young. When they cease to be efficient, they cease to be needed. And the unneeded may as well be "forgotten" and, as a result, lonely (the philosophy of increasing ageism). Seniors are withdrawn from the economic rat race. Therefore, they require stimulation through proper social policies. Furthermore, the difficult situation of the elderly in relation to the addressed problem is caused by the lack of stabilisation of their environment – they have got only themselves to rely on.

The complexity of the issue indicates the existence of inner and outer causes of being inactive. Personality, cultural, and social reasons may be mentioned. The list is long, with not all of them confirmed through research:

- lack of self-confidence,
- fear of negative reaction of others,
- health issues, depressive tendencies,
- family situation,
- lack of individuality,
- fear of being perceived as ridiculous (by the family),
- social expectations (negative stereotype of seniors),
- feeling of a lack of control in life,
- incorrect attitude towards life (withdrawal, aggression, dependency),
- lack of energy,
- hitherto prevailing lifestyle (lack of an active routine),
- technological progress and the resulting secondary illiteracy,
- egocentrism,
- low self-esteem,
- over-protectiveness (of the family, the social assistance),
- negative reflection on life,
- the economy,
- lack of local opportunities,
- ageism (among young people),
- fear of the new,
- lack of stability in the immediate environment,
- the media (the image of the elderly),
- architectural barriers,
- lack of ability of functioning beyond personal space,
- lack of the feeling of economic and social security,
- lack of skills necessary to function in organisations,
- being overly family-oriented and distrustful,
- loss of physical attractiveness,
- political barriers (incorrect social policies related to seniors),
- limited living space,
- lack of free time management skills,
- pension schemes (unchanging for years – “the young retired”).

Being inactive leads to faster emotional, physical, social, and cultural ageing. Seniors become emotionally and socially poor. Being inactive and the lack of relationships, help from others, and being helpful leads to a feeling of uselessness, harm, isolation, loneliness, and low self-esteem.

How to stimulate and promote active living?

I see many opportunities here, with the use of the methods of socio-cultural animation, among others. A presence of seniors animateurs in local communities appears to be of crucial importance. One must be made to take part in situations

requiring cooperation and relationships with others in a thought-out and planned way. Educational programmes consisting of work on awareness as part of gerontological prophylactics are to be considered. The promotion of learning as a lifestyle along with an amendment to the higher education act allowing for the opening of private and public universities to informal forms of education of seniors could be of great help.

The rising educational aspirations of the older generations would be addressed by new educational paths proposed by universities. Emphasis must be put on broad computer science education. These should be available in the local communities of seniors.

The chances for a change would doubtlessly be greatly increased with all attempts at promoting further professional activities along with voluntary work. Taking part in the activities of NGOs (in the developed countries seniors constitute a majority of voluntary workers) needs to be distinguished.

Organising retirement courses aimed at preparing people for the new social situation as well as development of gerontological counselling combined with organising mutual help groups and social support groups seem to be necessary.

Substituting the protective model with the educational model should be proposed as part of the change in the model of care of seniors.

The "youth" in old age lasts as long as the engagement in those and other forms of being active. Because one who feels the need to be active never gets old. One aware of the fact that his activities are as a "fountain of youth" is psychophysically fit and ready to help others. One is happy with his life; in other words, one feels his life in of relatively high quality.

Conclusion

Seniors need to be provided with opportunities to lead active lives again, because it is possible to organize and realize new tasks, undertake new goals, hobbies, and interests in old age. It is the seeking for adequate and satisfying substitutes for the lost social roles. It may be achieved through implementation of the propositions of proper social policies related to seniors:

- Promotion of taking active part in the life of the community as an element of social policies meeting the EU standards requires numerous opportunities aimed at support and stimulation along with organisation of voluntary work. Leisure time must be "experienced" rather than being empty and filled with watching TV. Various recreational, counselling, and information organizations are needed.
- Constructing new awareness – education of seniors as work on awareness.
- I propose to prolong professional careers according to EU standards (those incapable of work are to receive social aid).
- Integration, promotion of active living, and education of seniors are to be parts of the systemic solutions implemented by social assistance in order to actually contribute to changing the quality of the lives of seniors.

- Social policies must allow for the adapting of seniors to social changes in order for them to “keep up with life” and realise their potential.
- There are three main reasons of social exclusion: lifestyles of seniors, common stereotypes connected with the elderly, and low material status of seniors. Yet another, new reason appears – the increasing presence of computers in everyday lives.
- Support programmes for seniors require changes in the present social policies, which includes a reorganisation of certain elements of healthcare and social assistance systems.

In the integrating Europe there are numerous new models of seniors' active lives that may serve as examples. It is a model of seniors as active, creative, open, and self-aware people of the future. The social and cultural world that fills the living space of seniors gives deeper meaning to the existence, increases its value, while at the same time allowing for the perception a relatively high quality of life. The social and cultural space of one's life is not only constructed of the outside environment – the care, support, and cultural organisations, and cultural life of the community – but also of one's inner life – one's life philosophy, system of values, attitude towards old age, lifestyle, leisure time activities, and social relationships. Seniors should also feel responsible for this image. The responsibility of social policies appears to remain merely a proposition.

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Constructing group communication among seniors. Research analysis

Summary: The contemporary tendency for people to expect fast achievement of long-term results of their undertakings makes creative activities useful. Creative methods of group work allow the participants to get to know each quickly, to create a bond within a team, to shape the information transfer, and to acquire knowledge through active and creative work. The most important conclusion, however, is related to the thesis proposing that constructing group communication through creative methods of work is appropriate for seniors, as well. It allows for a full integration, promotes being active and learning and, as a result, encourages development to fulfil the role of an active senior. It may be suggested that creativity and being active as stimulated during group communication workshops constitutes a form of social experience for the seniors, which might be new to most, but is not necessarily denied or rejected. As a result of the organised workshops it may be concluded that seniors are aware of and are open to the need to change; they merely require understanding and support. The contemporary methods of education and adaption to various changes by the seniors need not be different from the standards of teaching young people. It is certain that some seniors require some more time and understanding throughout the learning process. However, intelligent and vigorous individuals as well

as those quiet or shy may be found among the seniors, just like in all the other age groups. Still, there are no actual reasons to deny them a participation in effective education and learning new things.

Key words: seniors, group communication, project, creativity, being active, workshops, activity, initiative, needs, education.

*Autumn is wise! It unveils the passing beauty (...)
Thank you for autumn! In autumn nothing is immature, rapid, unstable.
All is quiet, fulfilled, mature, reconciled, coherent
[Pino Pellegrino, I love autumn]*

Introduction

Communication among people with all possible means, has always constituted the basis of not only the processes of socialisation and acquiring of knowledge, but also of fulfilling primary needs. According to psychologists, the participants of all group meetings have three basic needs: to belong, to be influential and to feel valuable (important)¹⁾. This further emphasises that fact that group communication must reach a certain level in order to allow for the fulfilling of the aforementioned needs. The contemporary world is developing rapidly and it is constantly changing, which makes the use of innovative methods of educating the society necessary. Contemporarily, the way of starting a conversation is important and organising workshops teaching proper personal relationships is crucial. Of the numerous current transformations, the proper attitude towards seniors and their further development is necessary. People of the „60+” age constitute a group that is, without sufficient preparation for the many changes, most highly vulnerable to being lost in the modern world. That is why nowadays the emphasis is put on seniors. The increasing lifespan presents humanity with new challenges. I believe that the education of seniors and promotion of their active participation in social life are the most important of them. It can be posited that the more interpersonal contacts one makes, the better his communication with the environment is. According to J. Kargul, there are many means of transferring information that are used during interpersonal interaction and if they are to be perceived as an area of education then – to put it simply – it is through interaction that one learns to communicate with others²⁾. E. Trafiałek, in turn, emphasises the fact that in contemporary civilised world there exists a new rule of experiencing old age and a new lifestyle of the retired. They involve sport, recreation, trips, socialising, culture, interests and hobbies, and, furthermore,

¹⁾ E. Wójcik, *Metody aktywizujące w pedagogice grup*, Kraków 2000, p. 62.

²⁾ J. Kargul, *Obszary pozaformalnej i nieformalnej edukacji dorosłych. Przesłanki do budowania teorii edukacji całościowej*, Wrocław 2001, p. 93.

the growing need for education and updating the knowledge of the world around us. The new lifestyle essentially consists of being active and optimally mobile³⁾.

Therefore, the participation in the *@ktywny Senior* project consisted of constructing interpersonal contacts within the groups of seniors. I attempted to demonstrate the creative teaching methods through organising the group communication workshops with seniors. It was important for me to verify if it is possible for the education process of seniors to be conducted actively and to constitute a means of adapting the group to the pace of contemporary life and establishing contacts with other age groups. Interpersonal communication is, therefore, a process that shapes culture and the individual, with a specific role in education⁴⁾. Putting emphasis on the group of research subjects, i.e. the seniors, and their adaptation to the active forms of taking part in the workshops and learning was the aim of the educational activities organized. The purpose of the workshops was also to present the constructing of interpersonal contacts among seniors through various creative methods of conducting activities and the assumption that group communication augments the development of people of all ages. Presenting the need to educate seniors, promoting projects tailored especially for them – projects such as *@ktywny Senior*, with communication groups organised as a part of it – turned out to be essential, as well.

I conducted the research in Wrocławskie Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych (NGOs support centre in Wrocław) – Sektor 3 – located in Wrocław at 65 Legnicka street. The group that participated in the research by attending group communication construction workshops was made up of seniors – inhabitants of the Popowice district of Wrocław. They took part in *@ktywny Senior*, having been chosen and having gone through the recruitment process. As a result, 57 people – 41 women and 16 men – participated in the project and my research. Most of them were aged 61–70; there were, however, a few people aged 50–60 and several over 70. The participants were retired or benefitted from social aid, since the activities of the project were tailored especially for them. The people taking part in the workshops were divided into 6 groups. The aim of the *@ktywny Senior* was first and foremost to increase the quality of seniors' lives. The head of the project was the author of the implemented plan connected with computer skills training for seniors, supplemented with further activities connected with, among others, physical exercise and the aforementioned group communication workshops. The project was carried out between March 3 and April 28 2009. My research took 6 weeks and I conducted six training classes for each group – one meeting a week. The classes lasted 45 minutes, with a 15-minute break afterwards. The research started with a greeting, introducing oneself and providing an outline of the methods to be used at each of the classes, the number and frequency of the classes during the first meetings

³⁾ E. Trafiałek, *Starzenie się i starość. Wybór tekstów z gerontologii społecznej*, Kielce 2006, p. 43.

⁴⁾ E. Wołodźko, *Komunikacja interpersonalna jako istota procesu edukacyjnego*, „Edukacja” 1999, Issue 1, p. 43.

of the groups. Informing the members of the project of their participation in the research long with presenting the aim of the examination and introducing myself as a researcher and a instructor was of utter importance. During the first meeting the questionnaire that constituted the basis of my research was also discussed and distributed. Out of the 57 distributed copies of the questionnaire 54 were returned to me. Analysis of the answers to the questionnaire along with the observations made during the classes constitute the fundamental source of reflection on the research and its results.

Analysis of the research material

The gathered research material and the conclusions based thereon constitute an attempt at answering the question: How is group communication constructed among seniors? On the basis of the analysis of the material – observation notes and questionnaire answers – I have outlined the areas that condition group communication workshops and that are suitable for seniors. I believe that the following areas of research, related to methods of information transfer, relationships between seniors, and creative methods in the education of seniors are of crucial importance.

Information transfer may occur in various ways. As it is proposed in the publications of T. Warner, the choice of the method of information transfer is not only influenced by the goal and the curriculum, but by the knowledge and skills forming the subject matter of the classes, as well⁵⁾. The workshops that I have conducted allowed me to draw a conclusion that it is important for the method of group work to be accepted by all the participants. That is because interpersonal

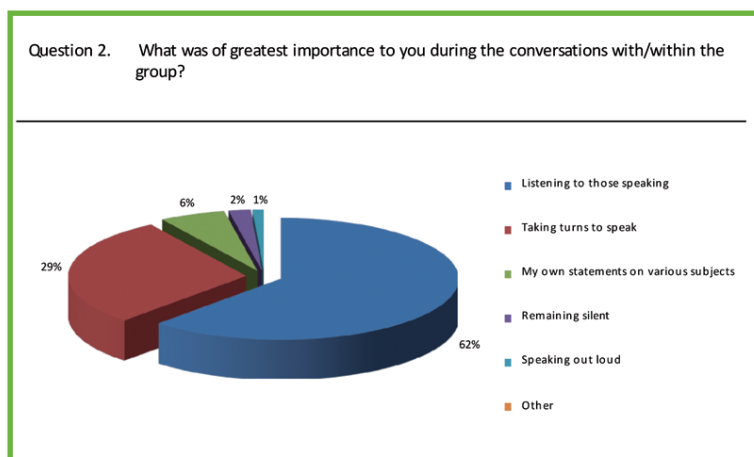


Chart 1. The most important situations during the conversations with/within the group

Source: The questionnaire answers.

⁵⁾ T. Warner, *Umiejętności w komunikowaniu się*, Wrocław 1999, p. 296.

relationships are influenced by means of information transfer. The set of questions presented below is related to that particular area of research.

The answers to question 2 – What was of greatest importance to you during the conversations with/within the group? – contain information relevant to the problems discussed in this part.

Question 4 – How can you interest the interlocutors in what you have to say? – was aimed at finding out which forms of expressing oneself are favoured by seniors. The data is presented in chart 2.

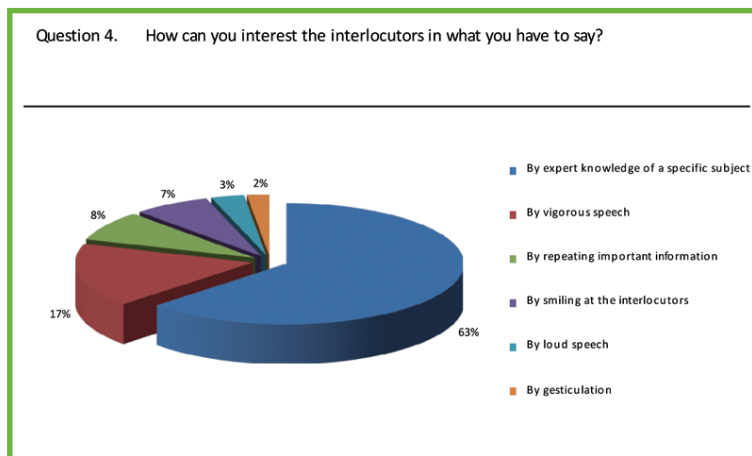


Chart 2. Information transfer means aimed at attracting the attention of interlocutors

Source: The questionnaire answers

Question 5 was opposite to question 4, for it was related to finding the situations interfering with the communication process, thus disorganising the group's interest in the subject of the conversation. The question was: Do you know any obstacles interfering with group conversations? If so, please select the most common ones. If not, please move on to the next question. The answers to the question are presented in chart 3.

In question 7 the surveyed were to pinpoint the factors that, in their opinion, influence the reception of the people speaking. To find the answer to this issue the following question was formulated: What do you pay attention to while listening to others? The results, related to the answers of the surveyed, are presented in chart 4.

The last issue related to this part of problem analysis is question 13, of the following content: Which of the following situations allow you to remember the information presented by a speaker best? The data collected is presented in chart 5.

A conclusion that the choice of the means of information transfer among the surveyed is related to, first of all, listening to the speakers and taking turns

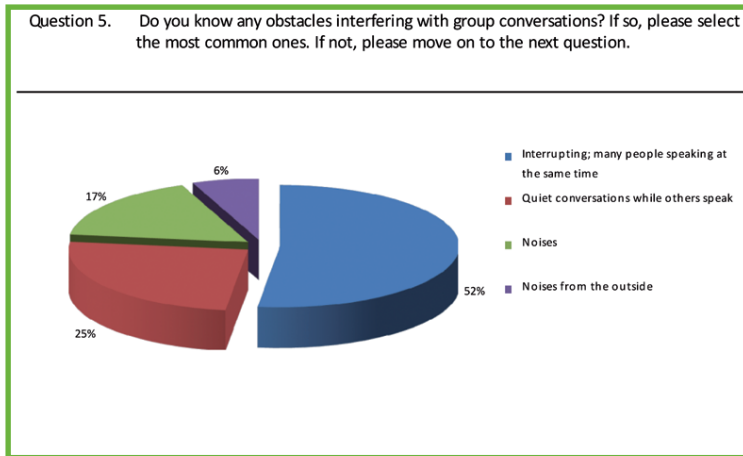


Chart 3. Types of obstacles in group communication

Source: The questionnaire answers.

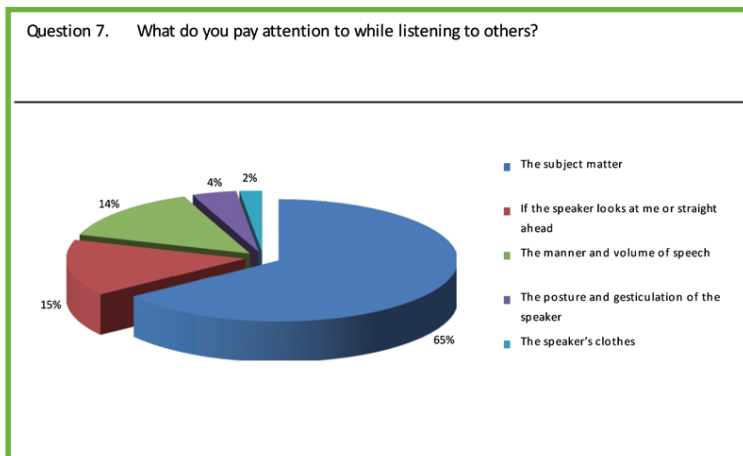


Chart 4. Factors related to listening to others

Source: The questionnaire answers.

to participate in the conversation by all members of the group can be drawn from the analysis of the questionnaire answers presented above. Majority of the participants declare that making eye contact during the conversation – i.e. looking at the interlocutors and speaking directly to them – is important. Competences such as expert knowledge of the subject matter, energetic speech and repeating the most important information are also considered by the surveyed to be essential to making interpersonal contacts. On the other hand, gesticulation and loud speech were mentioned by only a few. Interrupting and quiet conversations while others speak were regarded as obstacles interfering with communication and conversations within

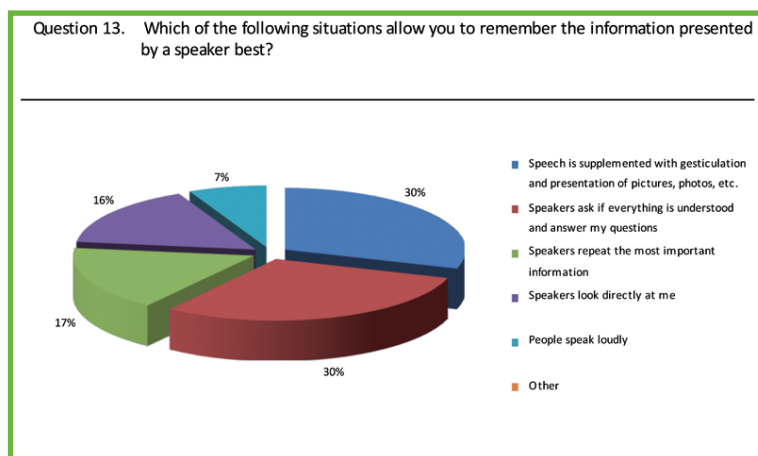


Chart 5. Factors determining the remembering of the information presented during conversations

Source: The questionnaire answers.

the group. Various noises, including those from the outside, were considered the least annoying. Such interpersonal relationships stimuli as visual presentations, asking if everything is understood and making eye contact are appreciated by most of the surveyed. It may, therefore, be proposed that the ways of transferring information during group communication are related to numerous situations essential and clearly defined by seniors. The observations made during the workshops provide the reasons and the continuation of the answers of the surveyed.

The observed progress of those participating in the research was accomplished thanks to active forms of carrying out the tasks, group work, and mutual support among the participants and the instructor. It must be mentioned that the active character of the classes turned out to be a pleasant surprise to the seniors. Integration games proved to be an important development stimulus to group communication during and after the classes. Lively conversation within groups during breaks and improving relationships may serve as examples. An important conclusion is related to the general atmosphere of the classes. According to J. Rojewska, the predisposition to solve riddles, crosswords, charades and to be willing to watch others carry out tasks is natural to all of us⁶⁾. Observation of the participants of the classes leads to the conclusion that the use of exercise involving the nonverbal aspect of information transfer stimulates the group to be active and encourages each of its members to take active part. During the classes I was also able to notice that the seniors have certain problems remembering information and immediate reaction to demonstration.

⁶⁾ J. Rojewska, *Grupa bawi się i pracuje. Zbiór grupowych gier i ćwiczeń psychologicznych*, p. II, Wrocław 2000, p. 58.

That is, however, a perfectly normal phenomenon, discussed in numerous medical publications. It has also been suggested by A. Chabior that in the realm of mental changes of seniors, motor skills, memory, concentration, and learning abilities are impaired with age; however, as proposed by contemporary experts on the subject, the changes are minute. To address the issue A. Chabior mentions a statement of J. Birren, claiming that the learning differences between the young and the old lie in perception, concentration, motivation, and physical health rather than the very learning abilities⁷⁾. One may also notice that fact that certain indispositions of some people had no negative influence on their movement and gestures. It was observed that these people were even able to overcome pain in order to exercise and prove their worth. Being physically active has important functions in the social and personal lives of seniors. A. Chabior emphasises that thanks to physical activity seniors fulfil their basic emotional needs of being accepted and praised, self-realisation, love, belonging and contact with others⁸⁾. It must be mentioned that whereas the answers to the questionnaire indicate that the surveyed did not consider gesticulation a practical information transfer means it was possible to use exercise to encourage many participants to use gestures. It can also be proposed that the character of all *@ktywny Senior* workshops and the place where they were organised stimulated development of the aforementioned physical activity, which, among seniors, is considered a very important criterion.

The situations that I had a chance to observe during the workshops allow me to draw the conclusion that that the means of transferring information while constructing group communication is decisive in regard to the effectiveness of classes. The fact that for the seniors – the research subjects – energetic and engaging exercises and their creative realisation had a positive influence and created an atmosphere of mutual understanding between them and the person conducting the workshops becomes essential. In relation to the observations and majority of the analysed questionnaire answers it may be concluded that seniors are aware of communicational needs and they do not avoid them. They can properly define the competences of the sender and the receiver, although they do not trust their own communication skills and the means of their realisation. That is why they require support. What is essential is that they do not shut themselves off and, contrary to the stereotypes, they are not obstinate and stubborn – they are, in fact, willing to be open and to learn.

During the group communication workshops I also conducted a few exercises, which allowed me to observe the forming and evolution of relationships between the participants, as well as between them and me – the instructor taking part in the exercises. To gather information about the second area of research that I

⁷⁾ A. Chabior, *Rola aktywności kulturalno-oświatowej w adaptacji do starości*, Radom – Kielce 2000, pp.30–31.

⁸⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

determined I used, apart from the proper group activities, a few questions connected with the proposed hypothesis.

The first question was related to establishing the partners that the participants preferred as co-authors of the acts of communication. The content of the question was the following – Who do you most enjoy talking to in a group? The answers are presented in chart 6.

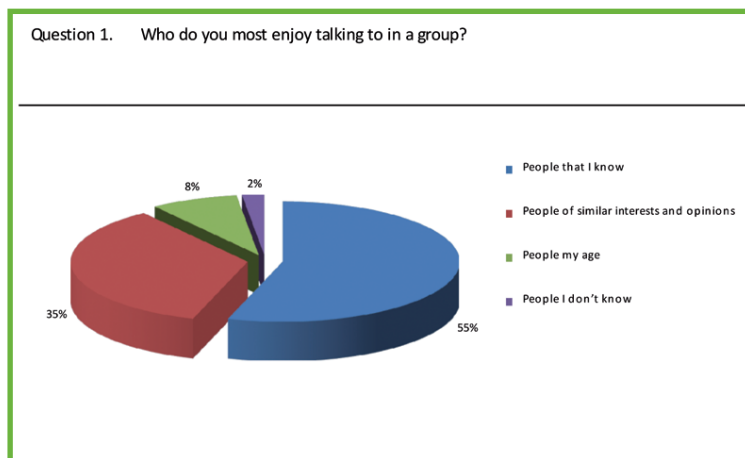


Chart 6. The choice of conversation partners

Source: The questionnaire answers.

To determine seniors' attitude towards public speaking I formulated question 3 – Do you enjoy speaking publically in front of a group? The data gathered from the answers of the surveyed indicates that 28% of the seniors enjoy public speaking and 57% do not. 15% chose the answer "I don't know".

In turn, question 9 is related to investigating the opinions of the surveyed as to their awareness of how they are perceived by others during conversations. I contained the subject matter in a multiple choice question: Do you pay attention to how you are perceived by others during conversations? It turns out that that as many as 69% chose the affirmative answer, with 21% choosing the "sometimes" option, and only 4% preferring the negative one. The remaining 6% of the surveyed could not answer the question.

In order to determine the frequency of making interpersonal contacts in public by seniors, question 10 was constructed – How often do talk to others in public places? The detailed data related to the answers of the surveyed is presented in chart 7.

Question 11 was related to the making and maintaining of social contacts by seniors. Its content was as follows – Do you like making and maintaining social

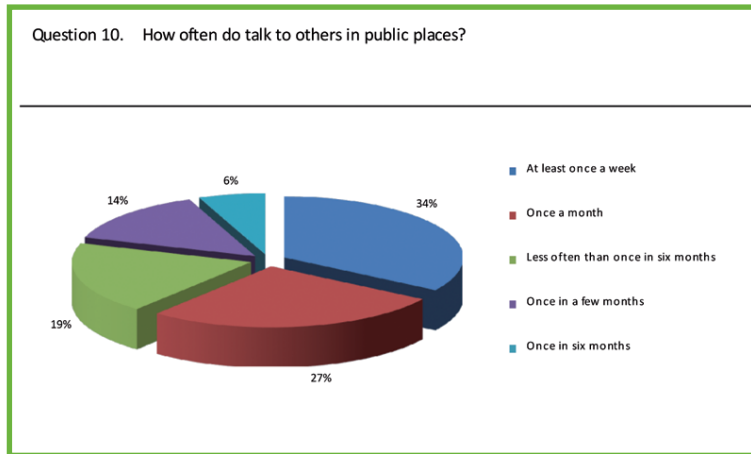


Chart 7. Frequency of making interpersonal contacts

Source: The questionnaire answers.

contacts? There were 80% affirmative answers and 13% negative ones. 7% did not choose an option.

To establish the reasons for making interpersonal contacts of the researched group question 16 was asked – Why do you most often start conversations with others? The data gathered thanks to this question is shown in chart 8.

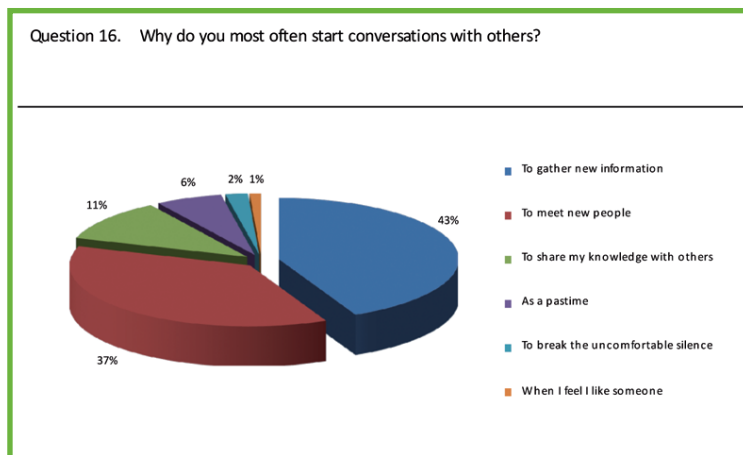


Chart 8. Reasons for making interpersonal contacts

Source: The questionnaire answers.

Among the questions discussed in relation to these particular problems there was the question 17, connected with the construction of self-awareness through conversations. The question was constructed as follows – Is it possible to learn something new about yourself by talking with others? The vast majority – 72% of the surveyed – gave an affirmative answer, with only 10% giving a negative one. The remaining 18% of seniors have no opinion on the matter.

Yet another question, assigned as number 18, is related to seniors indicating the attitudes that they take in interpersonal relationships. The issue was addressed in the question – If you happen to hear some criticism about yourself (uttered by your friends) what attitude do you take, or – in the case of a hypothetical situation – what attitude would you take? Detailed data is shown in chart 9.

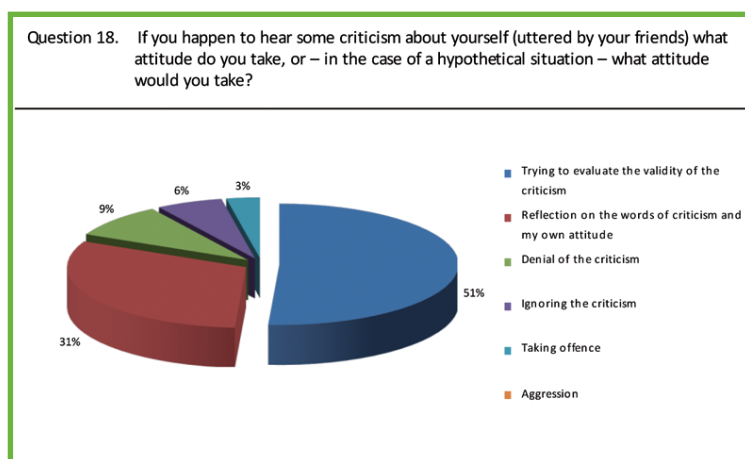


Chart 9. Attitudes towards criticism in interpersonal contacts

Source: The questionnaire answers.

Question 19 is an attempt at establishing seniors' tendency to interrupt. A multiple choice question was used – Do you ever happen to interrupt when others speak? 64% of the surveyed admitted to occasional interrupting, 10% confirmed definitely, while 26% denied ever doing so.

Determining age, gender, education, and profession of the research subjects was essential in outlining the interpersonal relationships between them. As I have mentioned before in the introduction to the article, most of the research subjects were aged 61–70, and the group consisted of 41 women (74%) and 16 men (26%). Most of the seniors had university (54%) or secondary school (42%) education. Representatives of numerous professions were to be found among the research subjects, with the group of teachers (14%) as the largest.

On the basis of the analysis of the answers to the questions presented in this section it may be stated that the surveyed prefer talking to people they know and

those of similar interests. Most of the seniors make social contacts quite often, usually in order to receive information or to get to know other people. Only a third of the surveyed enjoys public speaking. A majority of the surveyed pay attention to what others think of them and how others perceive them during conversations. At the same time, the conclusion drawn from the question related to methods of coping with criticism is of crucial importance because of the age of the research subjects. There is a popular stereotype of seniors being overly sensitive and unable to cope with negative opinions about themselves. Analysis of the answers allows for a refutation of this opinion. That is because it indicates that when the surveyed are faced with criticism over a half of them concentrates on evaluating the opinions, and a third reflects on the validity of the criticism. The majority of the surveyed are aware that having conversations with other people may allow them to learn more about themselves.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the answers to the questions related to age, gender, education, profession, and place of residence. The influence of the last factor cannot be determined due to the fact that all the surveyed live in Wrocław. Age-related differences also cannot be indicated, since all of the participants were of a similar age; that is, between 60 and 70. There was a diversity as to the declared professions and received education; however, it was only possible to describe it on the basis of the observations made during the classes.

Analysis of the observation notes made during the workshops leads to the conclusion that in relation to the gender distribution the greater number of women had an influence on the relationships between the research subjects. The women were more active and more willing to make interpersonal contacts. The differences in education, declared in the questionnaire and ranging from primary school to university level, were not made evident during the classes. The factor had no influence on group communication. The conversations between the participants of the research were related to everyday life matters rather than professional ones. Thus, the educational differences caused neither disturbance nor improvement of the relationships.

The conclusions based on the diversity of professions declared by the surveyed appear to be distinct. This criterion had an enormous influence on the level of relationships between the participants. The integration of those of similar professional interests was greatly affected by this factor, and all the participants were able to learn more about the jobs that were not numerously represented in the groups. On the basis of observation of the research subjects made mainly during the breaks between classes I noticed that they tend to share their professional knowledge. Similar conversations took place during the classes a number of times, as well. Perhaps the significance of sharing professional experience with others of seniors is related to a lack of ongoing contact with their occupations. That is because these conversations had a character of a certain affectionate return to the past. During the workshops there was a number of cases when the seniors

admitted to having had a hard time adjusting to retirement. Such problems are confirmed in reference books. L. Dyczewski, among others, mentions that reaching retirement or having to quit work due to health problems are certainly moments of possible crisis. Such situations are connected with limiting of social contacts and lowering of the living standard. Social status is often depleted and health may worsen. The situation is new and different and hence a cause of crisis to many⁹⁾. In summary, it turned out that the exchange of information about the past and present professions improved interpersonal relationships and created an opportunity to learn more about various subjects.

Drawing up a group contract was indispensable in order to conduct the workshops. Judging by the attitude of the research subjects the seniors perceived the points of contract that I have proposed and they themselves had a chance to develop as necessary rules. It is a proof that the participants were highly disciplined and cultured. It is important to notice the importance that seniors attach to good manners as a result of the rules and conventions that were inculcated in them in the past. As to the idea of the group contract – it turned out to be successful. It allowed the participants to feel that they had an actual influence on an important aspect of all consecutive classes.

The relationships between those participating in an act of communication are also shaped by the issue of self-awareness, i.e. the knowledge of oneself. During the group discussion organized after an exercise conducted to strengthen that factor among seniors the participants acknowledged the importance of the issue and the necessity to improve it by getting to know how one is perceived by others and shaping the knowledge of oneself accordingly. The research subjects' reception of the opinions of others corresponded with the previously discussed analysis of the answers to one of the survey questions. No one felt offended or sad; people smiled and felt pleasantly surprised, with but a few wearing expressions that revealed their attempts at reflecting on and evaluating the information they had received about themselves. During the workshops I have noticed that thanks to the exercise conducted to strengthen self-awareness the individual self was revealed. This indicates that in order to establish proper interpersonal relationships one not only needs to get to know more about the partners in the interactions, but also – perhaps most importantly – about oneself.

Introduction games designed to allow the participants to quickly get to know each other turned out to be influential, as well. M. Łaguna states that learning in a group allows one to gain new social skills, improve emotional intelligence and relationships¹⁰⁾, and the seniors' reactions during the classes have led me to similar conclusions. A situation that took place during a meeting of one of the groups may

⁹⁾ L. Dyczewski, *Ludzie starzy i starość w społeczeństwie i kulturze*, Lublin 1994, p. 81.

¹⁰⁾ M. Łaguna, *Szkolenia*, Gdańsk 2004, p. 188.

serve as an example of the goals of short activities. After completing the "Just like I do" exercise (consisting of producing sentences such as "Who likes dogs just like I do") two female participants suddenly realized that they had met before, in their youth. They remembered a period of time in their lives that they had spent together. Their joy was great and their reaction spontaneous. Completely free integration was thus achieved. This created a positive atmosphere of group meetings. The reactions of the participants led to similar conclusions as those suggested by B. Sufa, who claims that it is essential that proper relationships within the group be established through stimulation of the development of the partners in interaction rather than through pressure¹¹). It turned out that it is crucial that each participant be treated as a subject, especially in the case of interactions among adults. Respect and understanding are necessary, particularly when working with seniors. A conclusion that follows on from the aforementioned example is that thanks to fun and active learning methods an exploration and a development of a relationship outside the location of the workshops took place. It needs to be mentioned that it was owing to the place where the project was conducted and the atmosphere created by the organizers that the seniors felt encouraged to being active outside of class, as well.

The active methods of running the classes have inspired me to assume that constructing group communication by means of active methods allows seniors to integrate fully and encourages them to learn and to be active. I propose that such state may facilitate general development, even in the case of seniors. Their attitude towards the creative approach to group communication is reflected in the answers to the number of survey questions related to this problem.

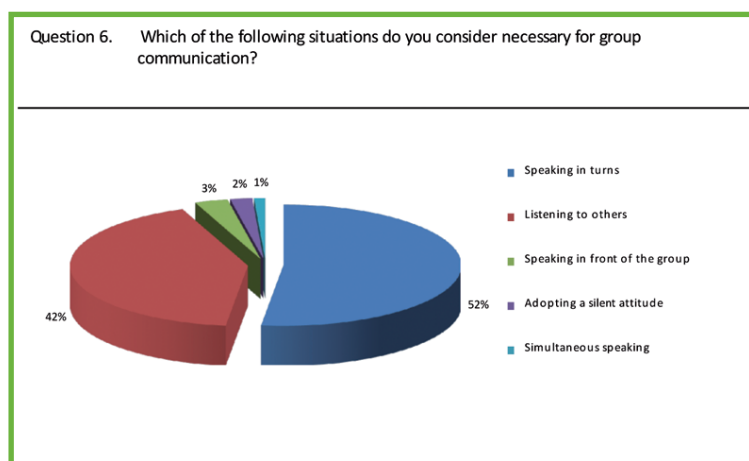


Chart 10. Necessary criteria of group communication

Source: The questionnaire answers.

¹¹) B. Sufa, *Styl komunikowania się nauczyciela z uczniami a skuteczność porozumiewania się i współdziałania w klasie*, [in:] E.A. Zwolińska (ed.), *Edukacja kreatywna*, Bydgoszcz 2005, p. 142.

Question 6 was related to the necessary criteria of group communication. The content of the question was as follows: Which of the following situations do you consider necessary for group communication? The data is presented in chart 10.

The problem related to the factors facilitating group communication was addressed in question 12: In your opinion, which of the following factors makes it easier to have conversations in a group of people? The answers of the surveyed are shown on chart 11.

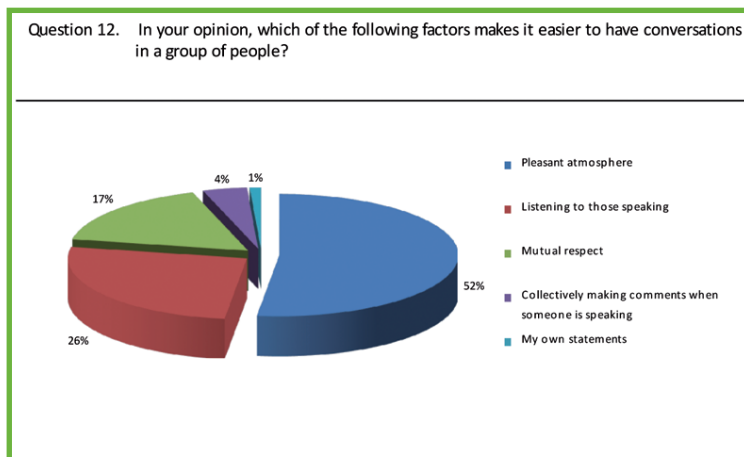


Chart 11. Factors facilitating group communication

Source: The questionnaire answers.

Yet another question related to the problem discussed in this section was question 14: Can group discussion be helpful in solving a problem? Despite providing 4 alternatives the seniors chose the extreme options, with 54% affirmative answers and 46% denying such possibility.

Question 15 was connected to polite ways of greeting each other, as used by seniors. It was formulated as follows: What polite ways of greeting do you use? With the data based on the collected answers presented in chart 12.

The last question analysed in this section is question 20: Which of the following situations do you find most suitable to have conversations with a group? It was aimed at determining which communication situations seniors prefer. The relevant data is shown in chart 13.

As suggested by the illustrations of the aforementioned questions, majority of the surveyed considers obeying certain rules of conversation necessary for group communication. Most of the participants mention speaking in turns and listening to others speak. Encouraging the participants to speak up in group discussion is considered creative. That is why a question related to the usefulness, or a lack thereof,

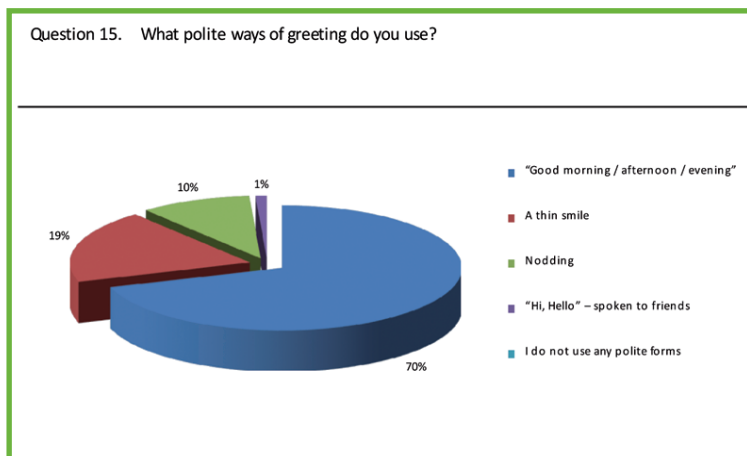


Chart 12. Polite ways of greeting

Source: The questionnaire answers.

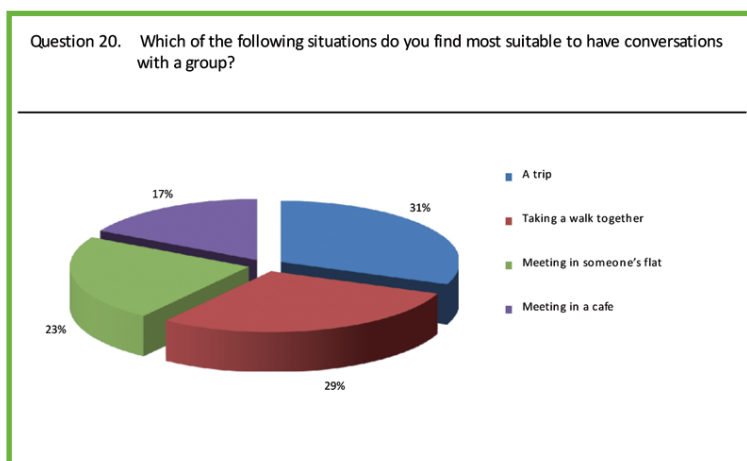


Chart 13. Preferred communication situations

Source: The questionnaire answers.

of this area of activity in solving problems was provided. The answers suggest that seniors consider such form of public speaking acceptable and proper. More than a half of the seniors indicated that group discussion can be a method of solving problems, and the rest declared that it may be suitable occasionally. No one was opposed to this practice. Analysis of the observation notes led me to a similar conclusion, because it suggests that the participants of the workshops were willing to sum up the classes and learn from them on the basis of the active group discussions taking place at the end of each meeting. The notion of creativity is connected with

the aforementioned methods of constructing group communication. The respondents' answers to the question related to the polite ways of greeting each other were a reflection of these activities. The traditional model, universally accepted in Polish society – saying "Dzień dobry" – proved to be the most popular among the surveyed. However, the seniors happened to be creative here. It was mostly related to those of the surveyed who were willing to choose the answers connected to the nonverbal side of communication connected to greeting, that is nodding or a smile. The seniors' willingness to establish interpersonal relationships during trips, walks, and meetings in cafes is yet another aspect of their creative and active attitude. There was also a group fond of communicating in someone's flat. However, active places and forms of developing group communication are generally the most common answers. It may, therefore, be suggested that the attitude of most of the research subjects allows for the refuting of the common misconception that seniors constitute a closed group and prefer to stay at home. That fact is emphasised by L. Dyczewski who presents seniors as opposites of the commonly accepted image of people outside of life's main stream¹²⁾. Seniors are not all the same and they cannot be labelled. The aforementioned author adds that social nature and the need for it to be fulfilled do not die with age; they merely alter and seek different forms of realization¹³⁾.

Thanks most of all to a series of exercises conducted during the workshops it was possible to present the role of creativity in learning. The activity where the participants were to illustrate the subject matter of the workshops through a poster entitled "Image of good communication" turned out to be the best way of presenting the creative aspect of learning. Materials such as cut-outs, glue, pieces of newspapers and magazines, crayons, and felt-tip pens were provided to make the pictures. The choice and use of the tools depended on the creativity and the ideas of the participants. That is because M. Łaguna emphasises that unconventional tools and materials influence the atmosphere of group meetings. The activity confirmed that they are a means of stimulating the improvement of communication, mainly in relation to its nonverbal and manual aspect¹⁴⁾. While the posters were being made I noticed that the participants took the task very seriously. However, not all of them took an active part. The role of the leaders who had previously emerged (usually informally) turned out to be essential at that point. Still, no one was made to actively participate in the tasks. Teamwork was important, however. The general atmosphere was that of tension and, at the same time, full cooperation. Observation of the behaviour of the research subjects during this activity as well as the analysis of the produced posters allowed me to draw the following conclusion. Teamwork based on cooperation, undisturbed information transfer, and negotiation of the form and content of the posters proved to be the decisive factors in working effectively as a group and achieving the final result.

¹²⁾ L. Dyczewski, *op.cit.*, p. 37.

¹³⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

¹⁴⁾ M. Łaguna, *op.cit.*, p. 114.

It also turned out that a creative approach of the instructor constitutes a factor generating a lively reaction of the group. I observed that my active involvement in the realisation of the classes generated a feedback in the form of a reaction from the partners of the contract – the group. They would speak, make eye contact, smile or nod. All these areas were a stimulus to conduct the workshops further and proved to be substantially influential. It may, therefore, be proposed that an individual approach to the plans of the classes and the conditions of all of the subjects are the essence of the implementation of creative methods in information transfer. K.J. Szmidt argues that a creative approach allows people to interact and to discover and construct things together¹⁵⁾. The author also proposes that help understood as stimulation, encouragement, support, assistance, and providing conditions necessary for a development of creativity constitutes the fundamental assumption of creative effort¹⁶⁾ and my analysis of the notes that were made during the observation of all the discussed activities as well as the feedback received from the research subjects supports this idea. A. Minczanowska, in turn, states that creativity assumes the concept of education connected with making an unimpeded development of personality possible as well as respect for the needs, aspirations, wishes, and subjectivity¹⁷⁾. Such was the situation created by the organizers of the project and it lasted throughout all of the workshops.

It may be suggested, on the basis of the conducted classes with seniors, that the creative methods of group work make it possible to get to know new people quickly, to create a bond within the team, to shape the information transfer, and to learn effectively. However, the most important conclusion is related to the idea that constructing group communication with the use of creative methods is appropriate for working with seniors. It allows for complete integration and encourages learning and being active, and, as a result, being able to fulfil the role of an active senior. Therefore, it may be argued that the creativity and activity brought into being during the group communication workshops constitute a type of social experience, as proposed by O. Czerniawska. It is her belief that various social experiences cause changes in the attitudes of seniors towards their everyday lives, needs and aspirations, and in the stereotype of the role of the elderly in society. According to O. Czerniawska, social interactions are to constitute the areas of activity and interest to seniors¹⁸⁾. Creating areas for social interactions is, therefore, of crucial importance nowadays. Having completed the @ktywny Senior project it may be stated with utmost certainty that it is one of the areas of such effort.

¹⁵⁾ K.J. Szmidt, *Dydaktyka twórczości*, Kraków 2003, p. 83.

¹⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁷⁾ A. Minczanowska, *Kreatywność jako wartość i cel edukacji*, [in:] E.A. Zwolińska (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 23.

¹⁸⁾ O. Czerniawska, *Drogi i bezdroża andragogiki i gerontologii. Szkice i rozprawy*, Łódź 2007, p. 139.

Conclusion

The conducted research as well as the observations made during the meetings with the senior groups allowed me to define the area related to establishing efficient group communication aimed at improvement and continuation of the seniors' activity. The assumed criteria were successfully verified among the research subjects. To sum up, it may be suggested that the adjustment of the methods of education and adaptation of seniors to contemporary requirements need not vary from the standards of education of young people. Even though some seniors may require a little more time and understanding, that is not the case with all of them. Intelligent and vigorous individuals can be found among them as well as those shy and quiet, just like in all the other age groups. However, there are no other reasons to exclude seniors from the process of effective education and learning new things. The aforementioned irrelevance of health problems to the participation in the proposed active learning methods may serve as an example. The most important issues in relation to the education of seniors turn out to be individual approach and equal chances for everyone. It may be assumed, therefore, that, as O. Czerniawska argues, contemporary third age education appears to constitute an important phenomenon that cannot be separated and isolated from adult education¹⁹⁾. Consequently, it is necessary to aim at their development, participation in further education, and benefitting from the same options as those provided during the *@ktywny Senior* project; a project organized to allow the seniors to progress.

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¹⁹⁾ Ibid., p. 111-115.

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"Learning from Life and One's Own Biography" Workshops

Summary: In the article the author discusses the "Learning from Life and One's Own Biography" workshops organized as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project. The aim of the workshops was to provide an opportunity for exchange of thoughts and experiences and the recalling of events from the participants' past. The classes were organized to allow for the sharing of memories and a reflection on experiences from a different perspective. The participants reinterpreted their past and reflected on their achievements which made it possible for them to acquire a better understanding of themselves and their environment, to accept their choices, and to become more open. The classes were devoted to three topics, chosen by the groups - My educational path; The meaning of friendship in life; Do we need role models nowadays? On the meaning of following a 'master' in life.

Key words: Workshops, learning from biographies, exchange and (re)interpretation of experiences, story, (self-)reflection, understanding oneself and others.

In March 2009 I took part in the *@ktywny Senior* educational project aimed at adult inhabitants of the Popowice district of Wrocław. The main classes consisted of computer skills training, which were accompanied by learning English language vocabulary related to computer skills, group communication, "Learning from Life and One's Own Biography" workshops, seminars on gerontologies and philosophy, along with a "Educational relationships – parents, grandparents, grandchildren", and reading and media training.

During the project I conducted a series of workshops on the topic of "Learning from Life and One's Own Biography"; I am also the author of the workshops syllabus. The aim of the workshops was to provide an opportunity for an exchange of thoughts and experiences and the recalling of events from the participants' past. The classes were organized to allow for the sharing of memories and a reflection on experiences from the current, different perspective to attribute new meaning to them, which made it possible for the participants to understand the events from their past better. The events were interpreted anew. The participants had an opportunity to listen to similar stories told by others. They reinterpreted their past and reflected on their achievements which made it possible for them to acquire a better understanding of themselves and their environment, to accept their choices, and to become more open.

I conducted two two-hour classes with each of the six groups that I worked with. Each group had about 10 members, mostly women. I proposed a number of topics to be discussed during the classes. I also made it clear that I was open to group members' suggestions. At the beginning of the first class I introduced examples of topics of the periodic workshops that I had conducted in the previous years with the students of the University of the Third Age in Brzeg:

- ❖ My invisible environment.
- ❖ My educational path.
- ❖ My family history.
- ❖ The journey of my childhood.
- ❖ Childhood memories.
- ❖ Adult memories.
- ❖ The meaning of friendship in life.
- ❖ Emotions and their meaning in life.
- ❖ Image of my family home.
- ❖ Do we need role models nowadays? On the meaning of a master in life.
- ❖ Is there a formula for longevity?

Among the presented topics the participants of the workshops chose three:

1. My educational path.
2. The meaning of friendship in life.
3. Do we need role models nowadays? On the meaning of a master in life.

At the beginning of the first class I organized a "name cards" activity – everyone received a card to fill in – in order for the participants to get know each other better. They were to put the preferred version of their first name in the box at the top of the page. Then, the card was to be given to a person sitting two places to the left.

The person was to write down the names of a few things attributed with the name (features of character, a colour, a season of the year, an animal, a plant). The following stage of the activity was to present the name’s connotations to the group and to confront the person who originally filled the card in. It turned out that attributing such things as features of character or animals to a name carries connotations to people we already know – relatives or friends. Such utterances as – “Every ‘Anna’ I’ve ever known was gentle; that’s why I chose a doe and white”, “Every ‘Grażyna’ that I’ve met was vigorous and charismatic; that’s why I chose a tiger and red” – could be heard. Very often the confrontations with the “owners” of the card revealed that the expectations were completely wrong. The activity “broke the ice” and put everyone in good mood.

For each of the topics that were to be discussed I had prepared an introduction that was to provide encouragement for an exchange of thoughts, memories, and experiences. The main method that I implemented throughout the workshops was the use of unfinished sentences written on cards prepared for the classes. Each participant was to pick cards at the beginning of the class. For example, for the “The meaning of friendship in life” topic it was possible to pick the following:

- ❖ To be friends is to...
- ❖ What is important to me in friendship...
- ❖ I could never make friends with...
- ❖ In friendship I value...

Once the participants had picked cards, we came into the “land of friendship”. We listened to many youth and childhood stories as well as some current ones. It turned out that friendship means something else to everyone and its faces are different. It turned out that many people cherish close relationships built up in their youth, which is a source of pride and satisfaction to both sides. The relationships are often strong, characterised by close bonds, mutual respect, faithfulness, and unselfishness. Thanks to that experience we found out that friendship is founded on a number of common features and we realized just how important it is in every human life.

The cards that I provided for the participants were a “pretext”, as it were, for them to speak, share their experiences and memories, and to learn, to get to know more about themselves and others, to strengthen self-awareness. I have noticed how helpful the cards are when working with adults. I attempted to create opportunities to recreate the past and to understand the present with the complexities of life better.

It turned out that the form I had proposed was well-received. There was no need to encourage the participants of the workshops to speak. The seniors shared their thoughts and experiences connected with the chosen topic willingly. I also made an attempt to provide an opportunity for everyone to “be a part” of the workshops; I did not, however, make it obligatory for everyone to answer. Very often one or more people who have no problems with public speaking are to be found in a group. They are individuals of high self-esteem and self-confidence who feel the need to share their opinions. They often initiate discussions and exchange

of thoughts. Apart from them there are those who naturally enjoy listening, observation, and "keeping to themselves". However, some of these individuals tend to "get out of the shadow" and present their thoughts and ideas to the group.

It is my belief that the participants appreciated the value of sharing their usually quite distinct experiences. In andragogics experience is given the status of a personal teacher of an individual, with recognition of its educational potential. One may learn a lot from reconstruction and restructuring of experience. It constitutes one of the forms of education. The presented stories and relations encourage the participants of the workshops to study each other. Listening to others discuss a given topic often provides numerous perspectives that are helpful in evaluating one's own experience. Hence, an opportunity is provided to attribute new values to past events. It is essential in constructing an evaluation of life, especially when it appears to be negative.

During the following meeting we discussed another of the chosen topics – "My educational path". All the participants picked cards related to the education that takes place at school as well as in the social environment (through interpersonal relationships, at work, among friends, in the family, during trips, in everyday life situations that require problem-solving skills, etc.). Examples of the cards:

- ❖ What taught me the most about life was...
- ❖ Education is...
- ❖ A person's educational path is...
- ❖ A person learns by...
- ❖ Why we should study throughout our entire lives.

All the participants recalled different educational situations that they had experienced in the past and that had changed them significantly. Then we listened to various interpretations of the notions of education and a person's educational path, just like in the case of the friendship-related topic.

The last of the discussed topics was "Do we need role models nowadays? On the meaning of following a 'master' in life". Examples of cards:

- ❖ One can gain respect by...
- ❖ A role model is a person, who...
- ❖ My role model is/used to be...
- ❖ One needs role models because...
- ❖ Does the modern man need role models?

The topic encouraged the participants to discuss the lack of role models recognized by today's youth. Many people felt inclined to admit that it is a serious contemporary problem. We listened to stories of persons important to the participants; the stories of people who played important roles in their youth. Interestingly enough, they were usually grandparents, as well as parents. They provided excellent models for the young by preserving values such as respect for others, diligence, honesty, sincerity, etc.

Since it was out last meeting, I have prepared a number of affirmations for everyone to pick at the end of the class.

Workshops address the needs of adults, allowing them to use the “knowledge of life” constructed on the basis of past experiences that they carry within. They remind of the restructuring of experiences of obviously diverse character. Thanks to the workshops the participants learn more about themselves, other people, and the world. O. Czerniawska argues that the memory of the past discovered by telling a story (or writing a biography) reveals that which is invisible and immeasurable, but at the same time essential in shaping human life¹. It is my belief that this type of meetings allows for self-creation, self-presentation, getting to know one’s strong and weak points better, and, last but not least, provides an opportunity to meet other people. The participants of the workshops strongly emphasised the last aspect while expressing their satisfaction with being able to get to know their neighbours from the district. They also declared their willingness to maintain and foster these relationships.

My experiences lead to the conclusion that seniors are interested in that which is directly related to themselves; that, which they have to struggle with every day. They want to learn how to function in the world in a more conscious way. They want to manage and constantly improve their own lives.

M. Malewski² – an unchallenged authority in andragogics – enumerates three essential aspects of learning:

- 1) learning is of a holistic nature, which is why cognition is related to identity,
- 2) learning is of an interactive and social nature and includes the socio-cultural context,
- 3) learning is an unlimited process.

Such understanding of the learning process changes the hitherto prevailing idea of knowledge as a collection of textbook statements and allows it to take on a personal aspect³. It is my opinion that as organizers (initiators) of various forms of late adulthood education we should bear in my mind that human beings have a bio-socio-cultural character and they are ingrained in the environment, in the broad sense, as well as their biographies. That is why the education of seniors should be organized in such a way as to provide its participants with an opportunity for (self-)reflection on their lives, reinterpretation of experiences, better understanding of themselves, others, the world around them, sharing of emotions, achieving inner harmony, and constructing a wisdom of life.

¹ E. Dubas, *Biograficzność w oświacie dorosłych w ujęciu Olgi Czerniawskiej*, [in:] B. Juraś-Krawczyk, B. Śliwerski (ed.), *Pedagogiczne drogowskazy*, Kraków 2000.

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Supplement: Syllabus of the "Learning from Life and One's Own Biography" workshops

Class 1

Topic: "The meaning of friendship in life"

Aims:

- Shaping the ability to talk about one's own biography,
- Developing the ability to recall memories,
- Supporting reflection,
- Developing creative thinking,
- Developing group communication skills,
- Overcoming shyness,
- Developing active listening,
- Generating positive energy.

Materials used:

- Name cards (see: annex),
- Cards (see: annex),
- A box or a hat for the participants to draw the cards from,
- Pens,
- Chairs for all the participants, set up in a circle.

Workshop plan:

1. Participants sit in a circle. They receive the previously prepared name cards. They write their names in the boxes on the cards. They pass the cards to the persons sitting two places to the left. They are to write down the names of a few things attributed with the name on the card (features of character, a colour, a season of the year, an animal, a plant). The following stage of the activity is to present the name's connotations to the group and to confront the person who originally filled the card in.
2. The instructor introduces the topic of the class: "The meaning of friendship in life".
3. The group members pick cards related to "The meaning of friendship in life" out of the box or the hat. The instructor informs them that if they for whatever

reason do not like the card they had picked, they can put it back in the box/hat and draw a new one.

4. The instructor informs the group that they can provide whatever answer they feel inspired to by the card. The person who wants to address the topic starts the workshop. More people take turns to share their stories.
5. The instructor sums up the workshop, emphasising the diversity of the stories founded upon the various individual experiences of the participants of the class.

Class 2

Topic: “My educational path”

Aims:

- Shaping the ability to talk about one’s own biography,
- Developing the ability to recall memories,
- Supporting reflection,
- Developing creative thinking,
- Developing group communication skills,
- Overcoming shyness,
- Developing active listening,
- Generating positive energy.

Materials used:

- Cards (see: annex),
- A box or a hat for the participants to draw the cards from,
- Pens,
- Chairs for all the participants, set up in a circle.

Workshop plan:

1. The instructor introduces the topic of the class: “My educational path”.
2. The group members pick cards related to their educational paths out of the box or the hat. The instructor informs them that if they for whatever reason do not like the card they had picked, they can put it back in the box/hat and draw a new one.
3. The instructor informs the group that they can provide whatever answer they feel inspired to by the card. The person who wants to address the topic starts the workshop. More people take turns to share their stories.
4. The instructor sums up the workshop, emphasising the diversity of the stories founded upon the various individual experiences of the participants of the class.

Class 3

Topic: "Do we need role models nowadays? On the meaning of following a 'master' in life".

Aims:

- Shaping the ability to talk about one's own biography,
- Developing the ability to recall memories,
- Supporting reflection,
- Developing creative thinking,
- Developing group communication skills,
- Overcoming shyness,
- Developing active listening,
- Generating positive energy.

Materials used:

- Cards (see: annex),
- A box or a hat for the participants to draw the cards from,
- Pens,
- Chairs for all the participants, set up in a circle.

Workshop plan:

1. The instructor introduces the topic of the class: "Do we need role models nowadays? On the meaning of following a 'master' in life".
2. The group members pick cards related to role models out of the box or the hat. The instructor informs them that if they for whatever reason do not like the card they had picked, they can put it back in the box/hat and draw a new one.
3. The instructor informs the group that they can provide whatever answer they feel inspired to by the card. The person who wants to address the topic starts the workshop. More people take turns to share their stories.
4. The instructor sums up the workshop, emphasising the diversity of the stories founded upon the various individual experiences of the participants of the class.
5. The participants draw cards with affirmations from the hat/box.

Annex:

Examples of cards:

Topic: "The meaning of friendship in life".

To be friends is to...

What is important to me in friendship...

I could never make friends with...

In friendship I value...


Topic: “My educational path”.

What taught me the most about life was...
Education is...
A person’s educational path is...
A person learns by...
Why we should study throughout our entire lives.

Topic: “Do we need role models nowadays? On the meaning of following a ‘master’ in life”.

One can gain respect by...
A role model is a person, who...
My role model is/used to be...
One needs role models because...
Does the modern man need role models?

Name cards:



- FEATURES OF CHARACTER
- COLOUR
- A SEASON OF THE YEAR
- AN ANIMAL
- A PLANT

Affirmations for the participants:

I celebrate my ability to create my own
life. I celebrate life.

Our only duty is to save our dreams.
It is easy for me to do great things.

I know the answers to all my questions.
The answers lie within me.

I'm here, I'm not in a hurry, and I'm
doing what is most important for me.

Life recreates and renews my body,
every cell in my body is perfect.

Success is my divine fate.
I walk through life with self-awareness
and enthusiasm.

My body and my mind are free
of illness. I am healthy.

I deserve all the good I receive every
day.
All my dreams are fulfilled.

My mind is occupied with creative
ideas only. I consciously give up all
the other ones.

Every cell in my body is filled with
purifying, healing, strengthening light.

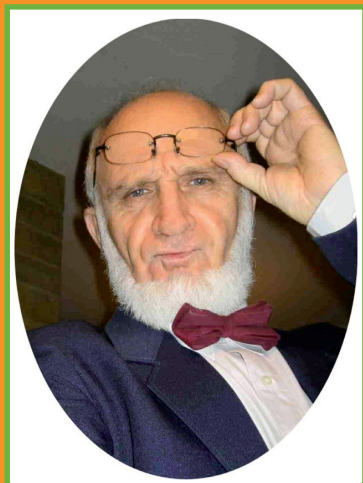
Love for everything that enriches and
fills my life.

I have an important role in the life
of my planet.

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Grzegorz Kazimierz Mendyka was born in 1944 in Żychlew (the Wielkopolska region of Poland). A 1962 graduate of Liceum im. Adama Asnyka w Kaliszu (Adam Asnyk high school in Kalisz), in 1955–1961 a student in a cello and piano class of Szkoła Muzyczna w Kaliszu (music school in Kalisz), professionally a chemist, with engineering and Master's degrees of Wrocław University of Technology, a long-term employee of Zakłady Elektroniczne ELWRO (ELWRO electronic works) and Instytut Komputerowych Systemów Automatyki i Pomiarów we Wrocławiu (computer automatic systems and measurements institute in Wrocław). The passion for chronicles and genealogy G. Mendyka inherited from his father. Chairman of the Silesian Genealogical Society in Wrocław. Author of articles on genealogy in the "Asnykowiec" periodic (14/2004, 15/2005).

Genealogy as a seniors' hobby

Summary: Genealogy and writing chronicles are presented as possible seniors' hobbies aimed at strengthening the intergenerational bond, improving and re-establishing family relationships, being open to the world and providing a chance to leave a permanent trace in the form of written works, family trees and chronicles.

Key words: Genealogy, family tree, chronicles, seniors.

For many years I have been promoting genealogy as an impulse to become interested in one's own family history, especially among the seniors. It is natural for seniors to be the ones possessed of the greatest knowledge of family and ancestors. They are predestined to make the youth (the descendants) realize their family and

region identity. Through conducting their own genealogical research within their families they have a chance to improve, or in some cases even re-establish family relationships and intergenerational bonds, and to pass the knowledge of the history of ancestors and the region of ancestry to relatives and descendants.

Finding one's identity is valuable because it improves interpersonal relationships, it broadens one's knowledge and it is deeply patriotic in its nature.

One of the most spectacular actions aimed at the promotion of genealogy is the multimedia presentation entitled "Genealogical peregrinations with the surname" (alternative title/subtitle – "Everyone can become a genealogist of their own family"). The interactive lecture-presentation is an introduction to the basics of genealogy and of how to start looking for one's own ancestors, family trees, etymology of surnames and their distribution in Poland and in the world and the opportunities for genealogical research on the internet. During the presentation the participants have an opportunity to look their own surname up in the *Słownik nazwisk współcześnie w Polsce używanych*¹⁾ (Dictionary of contemporary Polish surnames), consisting of 10 volumes, and written by professor Kazimierz Rymut. The dictionary contains over 300,000 surnames appearing in Poland since 1990 (data based on PESEL social security numbers). One has a chance to learn not only of the number of the people with his surname in each of the voivodships (and in all of Poland) but also of the numerous versions of the name.

Further in the presentation one is introduced to the opportunities to gain access to current data regarding the distribution of the surname (in 2002 and presently), which allows for the evaluation of the number of people who bear it (fig. 1).

Such observations encourage reflection on the mechanisms of the development of the community of those bearing one's own surname; i.e. one's distant relatives, as well the close ones. Presenting the opportunity to find one's own surname in different countries around the world is a source of inspiration to look for a chance to meet these people from abroad with the same surname. And generally, it triggers an interest in the internet as means of learning more about the world. It presents the practical advantages of sufficient computer and internet skills – the ones formerly acquired as well as new ones being taught as part of the @ktywny Senior project.

Along with taking up a wonderful creative hobby seniors are provided with an opportunity and a chance to establish relationships with younger generations and making contacts with their family members dispersed all over the world. Finding

¹⁾ K. Rymut, *Słownik nazwisk współcześnie w Polsce używanych*, Vol. 1-10, Kraków 1994.

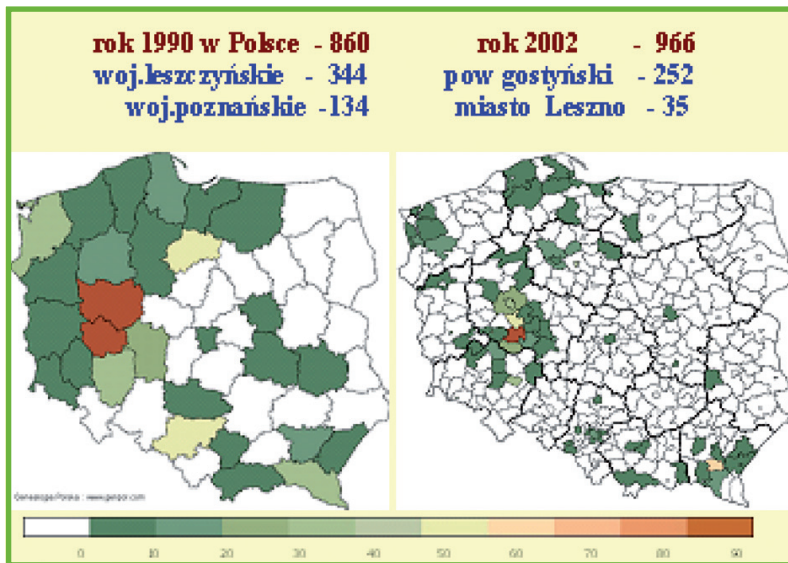


Fig. 1. The distribution of the surname Mendyka in Poland in 1990 and in 2002

Source: The author's study²⁾.

the ancestors of contemporary Americans with Polish roots in passenger records³⁾ of the old economic immigration allows one to come into contact with descendants of family members. The <http://familysearch.org>⁴⁾ website containing a database of birth certificates of the Mormon population might also be useful.

The genealogical "game" presented to seniors gives them a chance to leave a permanent trace in remembrance to their descendants, a family heritage in the form of written genealogical works and chronicles.

Let one of the numerous chronicles written by my father – *Księgę V Rodziny Ziemińskich z Krobi 1867–1967*⁵⁾ (Chronicle V of the Ziemiński family from Krobia 1867–1967) – serve as an example. A quotation from *Księgi I – Węzeł krwi*⁶⁾ (Chronicle I – Bonds of Blood) follows:

²⁾ Elaborated on the basis of: *Serwis heraldyczny Ośrodka Dokumentacji Wychodźstwa Polskiego w Pułtusk*, <http://www.herby.com.pl>, dostęp: 27.10.2010, K. Rymut (ed.), *SŁOWNIK NAZWISK używanych w Polsce na początku XXI wieku*, CD version GenPolCD001, Kraków – Warsaw 2003–2005, as well as with the use of the scripts tools from T. Nitsch's *Genpol* website, <http://www.genpol.com>, retrieved: 27.10.2010, the maps: <http://www.genpol.com/module-Mapa.htm>, retrieved: 27.10.2010.

³⁾ Passenger records of immigrants arriving at the Ellis Island port in New York City: <http://ellisland.org>, retrieved: 27.10.2010.

⁴⁾ Surname search in the Mormon population birth certificates database: <http://familysearch.org>, retrieved: 27.10.2010.

⁵⁾ W. Mendyka, *Księga V Rodziny Ziemińskich z Krobi 1867–1967*, (unpublished).

"I wish to preserve the events of the path of my life for my descendants. I leave no inheritance, so let at least these brief episodes preserved in the present chronicles be a trace of our ancestors... This work that I have undertaken in 1925 is an attempt to save these facts and events from oblivion...

You – my children and grandchildren – should take part in gathering documents...

Be persistent, so that the work of my life is not lost".

A newsletter written and printed by the family is an illustration of the genealogical and chronicle activity and integration of the family.



Fig. 2. Example of a family newsletter⁷⁾

Source: The author's study.

⁶⁾ W. Mendyka, *Księga I – Węzeł krwi. Kronika rodziny Władysława Mendyki* (unpublished).

⁷⁾ G. Mendyka, *Biuletyn Rodzinny Rodu Mendyków*, (family print, unpublished), Wrocław 2001, Issue 1.

The family newsletter (bulletin) may be edited together with other family members and distributed among the more or less interested; thanks to reading the paper with the current news related to their relatives those not very interested may increase their interest in the issues connected with the family, in the broad sense of the word.

Such a newsletter may turn out to be the only means of contact with relatives (who, unfortunately, often appear to be quite *distant...*) for seniors. Especially due to the fact that in the contemporary times of a typically juvenile (!) tendency to shorten all conversation, letters and contacts with the use of SMS language the senior generation might even lose the ability to agree and to *communicate* with the young.

The notion of genealogical research often leads to organizing family meetings and get-togethers, where the young are surprised to learn from the seniors that a computer can be used not only for games, but to establish contacts with relatives, as well. Family meetings provide the best opportunity to bridge generation gaps and foster family and social relationships. Organizers of the meetings (the most vigorous ones) have a chance to encourage all generations of the immediate and distant family to join in; however, it is essential that seniors participate, because their experience can be a source of many great ideas, and the fact that they tend to have a lot of free time allows them to realize the meeting plans (and more). Apart from the obvious advantages of meeting the well-known relatives again it is also an opportunity to get to know the young, the new spouses of those who remarried, etc.

Family symbols such as flags, coats of arms (sometimes designed and made especially for the meeting), badges and other interesting gadgets can be prepared for the meeting. Below there is an example of a coat of arms designed and made for the 1st Family Meeting in 1978.

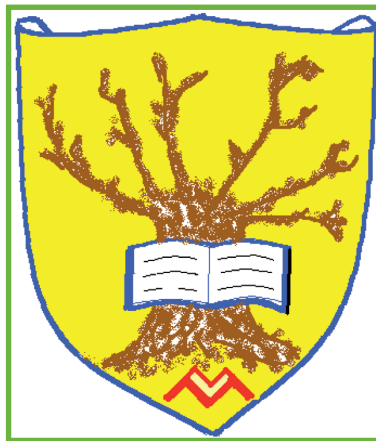


Fig. 3. DZINEK coat of arms

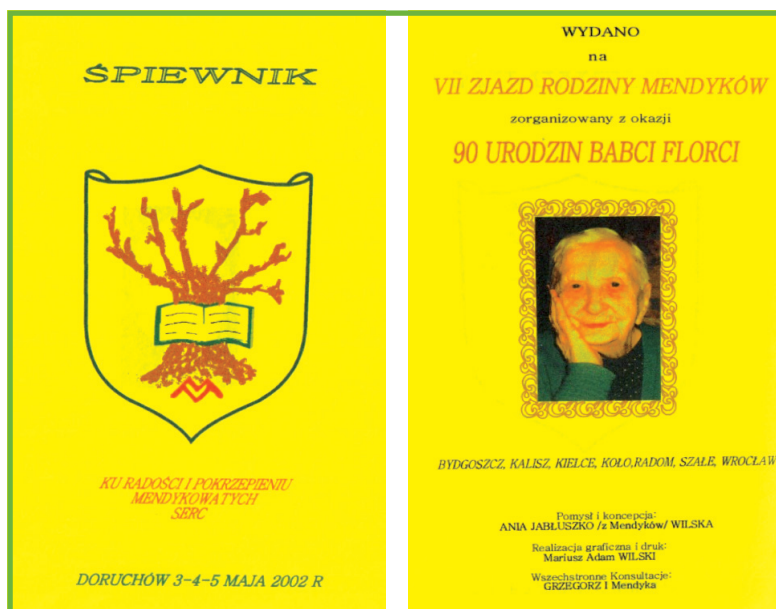


Fig. 4. Example of a family songbook (written e.g. specially for a meeting)⁸⁾

Source: The author's study.

The *Genealogical Questionnaire* (see: annex) written during the meeting plays an important role; it is also great fun. The questionnaire is a test of knowledge of the relations between the grandparents, children, grandchildren, etc. Answering the questionnaire together by e.g. a granddaughter and her parents and grandparents allows seniors to pass their genealogical knowledge on to the following generations in an enjoyable way and to have fun and appreciate being together and deepening the relationships. The same questionnaire answered again a few years later, during another meeting, allows one to observe the development of the family members' genealogical knowledge.

The meetings can – and definitely should – provide an opportunity to present the results of the genealogical research conducted by the family members. First of all, the family trees printed in the form of large posters or banners can be presented. Preparing such family trees, seeking information as well as conducting research related to the ancestors are wonderful pursuits making seniors active during long winter evenings (and the rest of the year, too).

To sum up I wish to present a letter written by one of the participants of the workshops – who herself does not belong to the senior age group, but she has established relationships with them – with the attached *postscript to life*:

⁸⁾ *Śpiewnik* prepared by the Mendyk family for the 7th Meeting in Doruchów (unpublished), Doruchów 2002.

"I pride myself on my work with the family tree – which is going very well – with the All Saints' Day being an opportunity to visit cemeteries with note book in hand and put down the dates of birth and death of my ancestors. The entire family thought I was crazy, but with time they 'got crazy' themselves. When we came back home everyone, recalling family memories and interrupting each other, made me include 181 people of 5 generations in the tree. Furthermore, I visited the aunt that I didn't like, whom I mentioned before, and who turned out not so bad and provided me with valuable information regarding my great-great-grandparents".

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Annex: Genealogical questionnaire devised by the author of the present article

LITTLE GENEALOGICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

.....// For genealogical use ONLY! \ \

Please write strongly and clearly – CARBON PAPER!! – what you know or ask Mum, Dad or anyone nearby who can help!

- 1. My name I, II, III: , pseudonym /> Now you can ask mum – information important for the horoscope

Born:

Date exact time place

I'm a member of generation I II III IV – circle the correct one – to make it simple: Florcia – generation I

- 2. Below write Name(s) I, II, III?/ date of birth/ place of birth - Father / /// - Mother / ///

- 3. My grandparents: name – surname / date of brith /place of brith - Grandfather from the father's side// - Grandmother from the father's side// maiden name: - Grandfather from the mother's side// - Grandmother from the mother's side//

- maiden name: - Great-grandparents from the father's side: - Great-grandparents from the mother's side:

- 4. My husband /wife: /names: !// - His/her parents/ - His/her grandparents/ - His/her great-grandparents/

5. My children and grandchildren – names, dates of birth, exact time of birth, places of birth, other: baptism, wedding, etc.

- 1) / / /
- 2) / / /
- 3) / / /
- 4) / / /
- 5) / / /
- 6) / / /
- 7) / / /

6. My parents' siblings: names, surnames, dates of birth, places of birth, etc.

- -
- Spouse
- -
-
- -
-
- -
-
- -
-
- -
-

7. My professional CAREER and education / dates! /

-
- Preschool events
-
- Schools

- Places of work, jobs, promotions, retirement
-
-
-

8. My family life:

- Baptism, godparents
- /
- First Communion
-
- Engagement
- I x
- Wedding in at (exact time) best men, maids of honour
-

9. My important events
 since the last meeting – Karlów 1991
 /
 – “” – in the II Millennium – to 31.12.2000
 – “” – in the III Millennium – since 01.01.2001
 – It is my resolution to: “start” – underline, “stop” – cross out
 Smoking, drinking, doing good deeds, sinning, reading, not reading, learning
 foreign languages, lying, not lying, other:
 – Lately I’ve managed to change: underline, cross out, put down
 /
 My job, my image, my car, hobbies, my flat, political ideas.....
 I’ve lost<.....
10. At last I’ll write what I think of the family newsletter and the fun of it
11. In genealogy, seeking out family roots and relations – underline, cross out,
 put down:
 a – Continue – how
/.....
 b – Let the matter rest
 c – Leave people alone
 d – Other ideas

 e – In my opinion

12. Write some more???
-
 /You may use the other (blank) page/

If you wish to pass you SIGNATURE to future generations, put it down HERE:

Inż. Marek Gulanowski

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Stowarzyszenie AVEC (AVEC Association)
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Engineer, graduate of automatic control and robotics at the Faculty of Electronics of Wrocław University of Technology. Currently a post-graduate student of the specialization. A teacher of English with 2 years of experience working for LEET and conducting individual and group courses as well as courses for senior students. Member of Stowarzyszenie AVEC (AVEC association); administrator of the website of the association. Instructor at text edition in the LaTeX system workshops as well as computer skills courses for seniors. His interests include robotics, music, and films.

Foreign Language Education of Seniors

Summary: A beginner level English language course organized as part of the *@ktywny Senior* programme is the topic of the present article. The participants' motivation to learn foreign languages and the basic aims of the course and its curriculum are discussed. The classes and the results of evaluation are described further. The main difficulties of foreign language education of seniors along with their influence on the course are presented.

Key words: education, seniors, English language.

Introduction

Foreign language acquisition requires a prolonged effort that tends to be wearisome. Furthermore, the forgetting of once learned material is bothersome, with the process becoming manifest even during short breaks in studying. However, the motivation to learn foreign languages is high nowadays. In the case of those

of the pre-working and working age the main motivating factor is the willingness to acquire professional qualifications. In the case of seniors the incentives are quite different. The participants of English language course organized as part of the @ktywny Senior programme mentioned the following motivating factors.

1. Language-related factors:
 - improving communication during trips abroad,
 - writing letters to friends abroad.
2. Factors unrelated to language
 - general willingness to acquire new skills,
 - willingness to go out and be with people,
 - willingness to keep being intellectually active.

The organisation of the course was different for each of the groups, especially in relation to its duration. In the case of the first group the course took six months, with the second it lasted two months, and with the third four weeks long workshops were organised. These differences resulted in differences in the curriculum and in the forms of the classes. The following terms are used further in the text: the term "course" is related to classes organised for the first two groups, the term "workshops" is used for the third group, and the term "classes" is used in the broad sense.

Aims of the curriculum and the form of the classes

In the case of the organisation of language courses it is essential that the level of language skills of the participants be sufficiently determined. First of all, the level of all the members of a group should be as similar as possible, and secondly, it should be taken into consideration while developing the curriculum. Low and very low English language competence appears to be predominant among seniors in Poland. That is why the present courses were tailored for those with no knowledge of the language whatsoever, or who studied English in the past, but have forgotten most of what they learned before. The participants were, therefore, informed before the start of the classes that no prior knowledge of English was obligatory and that is what they had to bear in mind when making the decision to take part in the course. That is why there was no need to organise an entry test.

The *New English File Beginner*¹⁾ textbook, published by Oxford University Press, with its methodology outlines constituted the basis of the curriculum. The teaching materials included: a student's book, a teacher's book, and CDs with listening and comprehension exercises. The curriculum would vary greatly depending on whether it was prepared for the courses, or for the workshops. In the case of courses a balanced development of all the essential language skills as well as founding a basis for further study were the priorities, whereas in the case of workshops the curriculum was, in

¹⁾ C. Oxenden, C. Latham-Keonig, *New English File Beginner Student's Book*, Oxford 2009; C. Oxenden, C. Latham-Keonig, *New English File Beginner Teacher's Book*, Oxford 2009; C. Oxenden, C. Latham-Keonig, *New English File Beginner Class Audio CDs*, Oxford 2009.

fact, more of a presentation – a few areas of vocabulary and grammar were demonstrated through the use of communicative exercises and activities. It was not necessary for the participants of the workshops to buy the student's book, which was an obligatory element of the course classes.

According to the prepared curriculum, the following language competences were developed during the courses:

- 1) vocabulary,
- 2) use of grammatical structures,
- 3) reading and comprehension,
- 4) listening and comprehension,
- 5) speaking.

In the case of workshops the main emphasis was put on learning vocabulary, with few reading and comprehension exercises.

The courses and workshops curriculum

The curriculum included the following issues.

1. Vocabulary:
 - a. expression used for greeting and getting to know people,
 - b. numerals 1 to 100,
 - c. names of selected countries and nationalities,
 - d. the alphabet and spelling,
 - e. items of everyday use,
 - f. people and family members,
 - g. colours and common adjectives,
 - h. basic verbs describing states and activities,
 - i. foods,
 - j. jobs and places of work,
 - k. telling the time,
 - l. everyday activities.
2. Grammar:
 - a. personal pronouns,
 - b. the verb "to be" in all plural and singular persons in the present simple,
 - c. singular and plural noun forms,
 - d. possessive adjectives,
 - e. position of adjectives in a sentence,
 - f. present simple – the use of verbs other than "to be".
3. Pronunciation:
 - a. pronunciation of common sounds: vowels, diphthongs, consonants,
 - b. differences between similar sounds,
 - c. pronunciation of the sounds that do not appear in Polish,
 - d. syllable stress in single words,
 - e. word stress in typical sentences, the rhythm of sentences,

- f. pronunciation of the third person singular "s" in the present simple and of the plural "s".
4. Speaking, communicative tasks:
 - a. greetings, introducing yourself,
 - b. spelling names, surnames, and common nouns,
 - c. giving personal information (age, address, phone number, etc.),
 - d. describing family members,
 - e. describing your job and working hours.
5. Listening:
 - a. recordings exemplifying the use of acquired vocabulary, expressions, and grammatical structures in real life situations,
 - b. authentic recordings of people met in the street.
6. Reading:
 - a. simple texts related to the studied vocabulary,
 - b. texts adapted from newspaper articles.

In the presented curriculum emphasis was put on the construction of proper routines from the very beginning. Teaching correct pronunciation of English words is essential in this context. By making it clear which sounds to use and how they are different from the sounds in Polish the practise of approximation of the newly learned sounds with use of the ones the students already know – a common mistake among student of English of beginner as well as advanced levels – is avoided. Likewise in the case of acquiring basic grammatical structures the used curriculum makes it possible to explain the presented notions without getting into unnecessary details.

Due to the limited time scope the workshops curriculum was greatly shortened in comparison to the courses curriculum. Emphasis was put on teaching a few basic areas of vocabulary as well as communicative expressions.

Adaptation of the classes to the needs of seniors

The classes were planned specially for senior participants. In regard to the organisation it was important to make sure the groups consisted of people of that age exclusively. As the participants themselves mentioned, when discussing their previous language learning experiences, they had attended groups with members of different ages, with the teaching methods adapted to the needs of the younger students.

Adaptation of the classes to the needs of seniors consisted of the following elements:

1. The choice of a student's book suitable for the use by people with poor eyesight. The selected student's book, even though not tailored for the seniors, had clear illustrations and a sufficiently large font.
2. Adjusting the pace of the classes to the perceptive competence of the participants.
3. Frequent repetition of the introduced topics in order to allow the students to memorise them better.

Realization of the classes and the difficulties observed

The most important of the difficulties expected when organising successful language courses for seniors was finding an effective pace of the classes. Difficulties with overcoming the participants' communication barriers, unwillingness to practice pronunciation due to self-consciousness or difficulties in the acquisition of grammatical structures. It was obvious that in relation to the reading skills, and especially the listening and comprehension activities, the limited time scope would make it hard for all the participants to make their first attempts at establishing contact with such texts and recordings.

Keeping an effective pace in introducing new material made it necessary for the teachers to constantly monitor the acquisition of skills defined in the curriculum by the participants in order to continuously adjust the pace of the classes. First of all, the point was made to constantly revise the previously presented information. In practice the pace turned out to be approximately 30–40% slower than in the case of groups of teenage or non-senior adult students with a similar level of language skills.

Especially during the first part of the classes it was necessary to overcome the barriers in communication; the teachers attempted to achieve this starting with the very first class. The expressions used for greeting others and introducing oneself that were presented to the participants instantly became the subject of communicative exercises. Similar approach was taken to all the newly discussed information that could possibly be used in an interaction, however basic. Overcoming the communication barrier turned out to be easy. The communicative exercises were presented to the participants in a fun form, with emphasis put on the importance of such activities in the use of a foreign language in everyday life.

Encouraging the participants to make attempts at pronouncing the sounds typical of the English language – especially those that are not present in Polish – turned out to be more problematic. First and foremost the difficulty lay in the "listen and repeat" exercises when the participants were to listen closely to the sounds of the newly introduced words or phrases presented by the teacher or by means of a recording and then to try to pronounce the words or phrases themselves. In order to encourage the participants this exercise was done as a group rather than individually. In order for the activity to be effective it needed to be explained to the participants that learning correct pronunciation is important from the perspective of successful language acquisition. The participants, initially reluctant to take part due to certain embarrassment related to the fact that they thought that repeating words together as a group resembled classes for children eventually accepted that form of pronunciation practise. The teachers paid great attention to precise pronunciation of the sounds typical of the English language as well as vowel length. The newly introduced sounds were explained in relation to the sounds of the Polish language, with necessary emphasis put on the differences. During the communicative exercises the teachers monitored the pronunciation and the sounds produced by the participants. Approximation of new sounds by those already known was

observed; however, thanks to the method of correcting students individually the problem was reduced. Although the participants never acquired a perfect pronunciation of the new sounds they managed to start to produce them in a different way than with the use of Polish sounds, which should allow them to improve the pronunciation with further practise.

Grammar is usually perceived as the most difficult aspect of foreign language acquisition, which is an exaggeration and a stereotype. It is doubtless, however, that it is hard to learn grammatical structures that are completely new, especially if these are distinct from the forms present in one's first language. As presented in the formerly discussed curriculum, in relation to grammar emphasis was put on basic structures necessary for producing simple utterances. An attempt was made not to spend too much time discussing grammar; however, the area was not ignored. During the classes it turned out that grammatical structures were the most difficult for the participants to learn, which is why the method of constant revision of the formerly introduced information was put to maximum use. Satisfactory results were observed in making the participants understand that certain grammatical structures exist and that many of the rules are different from those governing the use of Polish. However, a successful acquisition of the structures and of the skills necessary to use them effectively requires a lot of practise and may be achieved during further study.

An important aim of the organised courses was to make an attempt at providing the participants with basic skills and knowledge necessary for individual, independent work with texts and understanding speech. In the student's book that was used there are many texts' with those at the beginning very short and relying on limited vocabulary, consisting exclusively of words that were formerly introduced to the course participants. With progress in learning the texts would become longer and adaptations of real newspaper articles were introduced. The vocabulary used in the text would eventually go beyond the previously acquired words in order to teach a strategy that is essential in working with texts which is for the reader to focus on the understandable expressions with the meaning of the others worked out from the context or even ignored, provided that they are not crucial in understanding the text as a whole.

The listening and comprehension exercises were of two sorts. The first type included those that were used while introducing new expressions. These consisted of simple, carefully pronounced conversations, where the expressions would often appear for the first time during the course. Their meaning was made evident through the context constructed of previously acquired expressions as well as ambient sounds (e.g. sounds one can hear in a lift, in a hairdresser's). In this way an opportunity was provided for the participants to actively and, in part, independently find out the meaning of the new expressions, which facilitates memorisation. The second type of listening and comprehension exercises consisted of those that were used during the phase of the revision of the formerly introduced expressions. First of all,

they facilitate the revision and memorisation process; however, their aim was mostly to prepare the students to take part and deal with real life communication, because these recordings were not made by professional readers; instead, they consisted of the utterances of native speakers who provided spontaneous answers to questions. At his level of language skills understanding these recordings turned to be difficult, if not very difficult; however, it provided an invaluable opportunity for the participants to listen to everyday language. Furthermore, it constituted an important motivating factor, because when at least a part of such a conversation was understood it allowed the participants to feel that the skills they had acquired may be useful outside the class environment.

Evaluation of the classes, feedback from the participants

During the classes constituting the courses evaluation questionnaires were distributed. The participants' rating of the courses was very high, with all the grades given situated between 8 to 10 points out of 10. The teachers were awarded the highest grades by the majority of participants, with the lowest grade being 9 out of 10 points. In no way do these results constitute an objective indicator; however, they give information of the positive impressions of the participants.

The questionnaire included questions related to the course curriculum, as well, where the participants could state which of the elements were overrepresented, and which there should have been more of. Majority evaluated the curriculum as sufficient, although some answers suggested that there should have been more speaking exercises; some even said that there should have been more grammar practise. The pace of classes was seen as optimal. In the questionnaire the participants were also asked to estimate the progress that they made in the particular areas of language competences. In this many participants were quite modest, with medium or lower grades given (4–8 out of 10 points).

It was also possible to provide longer written assessment of the courses. These answers were positive, some even enthusiastic and, last but not least, indicated that the participants were glad to have had the chance to participate in the organised courses. It proves that nowadays there is a demand for English language courses for seniors which is not satisfied or the opportunity to participate in such courses is not being sufficiently promoted.

The last, perhaps the most important question was related to the willingness to continue learning English and the expectations as to the types of skills to be developed further. There were many affirmative answers, with the need to learn the "everyday language", the informal language, emphasised.

The participants were expected to take final tests, which constituted yet another element of the evaluation, which was important for the seniors themselves. The results of the tests were positive, with all the participants receiving at least satisfactory grades. Most scores were within the 60–80% scope. The tests were given back to the participants after grading and the most common mistakes were discussed.

Conclusions of the organised classes

The fundamental conclusion to be drawn from the organised courses and workshops is that among seniors there is a demand for foreign language courses. Furthermore, it has been proven that it is possible to organise the courses in such a way that they are effective from the perspective of an objective evaluation of acquired skills (test results) as well as from the point of view of the subjective assessment of the participants (questionnaire answers). Providing further opportunities for language education of seniors as well as promotion of active use of the acquired language skills, e.g. on the internet – in the case of seniors who also made an effort to learn computer skills – should be considered.

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On the activation of seniors – photos



Lectures on the activity of seniors



The Learning From Life and One's Own Biography workshops



On the activation of seniors – photos

Group communication
workshops



Classes in the public library

On the activation of seniors – photos



Lectures on genealogy





PART II
Computer skills training for seniors

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Motivations, expectations, and demands of seniors participating in computer skills training

Summary: On the basis of the assumptions of the model of motivation in adult education as proposed by M. Crowder and K. Pupynin the author presents results of the research on motivation factors of the seniors who participated in computer and internet skills training course organised as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project. The changing of the participants' expectations in relation to the process of education and the instructors during the course was analysed, as well, and a number of demands aimed at improving the proposed courses for seniors was presented.

Key words: computer skills course, senior, education, motivation for education.

Introduction

The contemporary world, full of state-the-art technology and open to communication is not easily accessible to all members of society. That which for a first-grader is an obvious aspect of everyday life and its crucial element to a senior may appear as a world of the unknown and inaccessible. A world where seniors are marginalised.

Bearing that in mind, I have made – with the cooperation of Stowarzyszenie AVEC (AVEC association) – an attempt at developing a system of training courses aimed at preventing the marginalisation of seniors. Computer skills training constituted its basis, since it is in this department that most seniors lack education. Computer and internet skills training courses for seniors are immensely popular and in many cases they encourage the seniors' decision to participate in various projects tailored and organised for them.

As Stowarzyszenie AVEC we have been conducting the aforementioned courses since 2007, and two years later we were invited to participate in the @ktywny Senior project as organisers of computer skills training courses. Thus we were provided with an opportunity to conduct a thorough research on computer skills education in this age group, with motivations, expectations, and demands constituting the notions to investigate.

The @ktywny Senior project had 60 participants divided into 6 groups of 10 people. Each group consisted of those who have never worked with computers before as well as those with certain elementary knowledge; however, it was necessary for all the participants to receive basic skills training.

The research of motivations, expectations, and demands of seniors related to the computer skills courses was conducted twice – at the very beginning of the project and during the training. The research was carried out by means of a survey consisting mainly of open-ended questions. The first group included fairly general questions and many participants answered that they simply want to learn to use computers. However, the answers addressing the seniors' expectations related to the computer skills course that were provided during the training may be divided into two groups: those related to the classes themselves and those related to the instructors.

Motywacje

Motivation constitutes the first stage in the process of education of seniors, in the broad sense of the term, because it results in seniors and instructors meeting in a computer lab and setting out on a journey into virtual reality.

The dictionary definition of motivation states that it is a declaration or display of the motives behind one's actions, behaviour – reasoning¹⁾. Elaboration upon

¹⁾ E. Sobol (ed.), *Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN*, Warszawa 1995, p. 746.

the notion of motive is required; it is to be understood as an impulse to act in order to achieve a goal – an incentive, a reason²⁾.

The model of motivation in adult education was developed by M. Crowder and K. Pupynin³⁾. In Polish social sciences it was described by M. Malewski⁴⁾, who considered the thesis that the assumptions that:

- ❖ the undertaken actions lead to participation in education,
- ❖ the participation leads to results-rewards,
- ❖ the rewards satisfy one's essential needs⁵⁾

are fundamental conditions of adult educational activity the basis of the proposed theory.

The discussed theory of motivation is founded upon the assumption that one's expectations related to education are rooted in previous educational experiences. What is characteristic is that in the group of seniors participating in the project 53% have received university education and 40% secondary school education. During the courses many of the seniors admitted to having had worked jobs related to education or requiring constant learning.

As presented in the diagram (fig. 1) educational experiences are correlated with the feeling that one's actions are successful – the people who have such sense are able to overcome numerous obstacles to realise their educational aims. During computers skills courses this is manifest in frequent consultations with the instructors, using the time dedicated to them, regularity in completing tasks as well as doing physical exercises aimed at preparing hands for the use of the mouse.

Having the sense of control over the events that one takes part in serves to strengthen the feeling of one's successfulness. During the courses such sense could be encouraged through conversations on the topic of expectations related to the essence and the form of the training, resulting in making the requested information a part of the curriculum – in practice the emphasis was usually put on the willingness to devote more time to subjects connected to internet use – or introducing the proposed changes to organisation of the classes – adding breaks, dictating notes, and additional consultations.

The third element constituting one's educational experience is fulfilling the needs that one has; two aspects should be taken into consideration: the experience with rewards that one has formerly received in the process of education and the sense of having influence on the receiving of rewards⁶⁾. In relation to the computer skills courses for seniors this is the source of self-confidence and the sense that it is, in fact, possible

²⁾ Ibid., p. 746.

³⁾ M. Crowder, K. Pupynin, *The motivation to Train: A Review of the Literature and the Development of a Comprehensive Theoretical Model of Training Motivation*, Sheffield 1993.

⁴⁾ M. Malewski, *Teorie andragogiczne*, Wrocław 1998, p. 67.

⁵⁾ Ibid., p. 67.

⁶⁾ Ibid., p. 69.

to learn to use a computer and participate in the virtual world, provided that enough practice is done.

The last of the elements in this field correlated to educational experience is the understanding of one's own abilities, which includes an established self-awareness and self-esteem in relation to learning tasks⁷⁾. In connection to these issues it was possible to observe a clear ambivalence in the seniors' approach to their own abilities resulting from positive (in most of the cases) evaluations of the abilities related to numerous aspects of personal and professional life with competences necessary to use computers excluded. Many of the seniors that we taught lost faith in the possibility to ever learn to use computers because of former negative educational experience and the lack of patience of "home instructors", i.e. children and grandchildren. It must be emphasised that here lies the greatest generation gap. Young people, all of whom have been in contact with computers since early childhood cannot imagine a world without the mentioned devices or a lack of internet access. They cannot comprehend that there are people with no understanding of the virtual world who live only in the real one. Many of the seniors participating in the courses sees the training as a "last chance" / in case of failure they most probably will never be able to convince themselves that they are able to become everyday users of computers and the internet. Herein lies the great role of sufficient preparation of the course based on the theory of motivation and relying on positive reinforcements.

The aforementioned educational experience and its elements along with the fundamental elements of the theory of motivation – in the form of the previously discussed assumptions that undertaken actions lead to participation in education which gives results-rewards satisfying one's essential needs – have an influence on the willingness to learn and, in effect, determine the level of one's motivation. In result, those participating in the process of education establish goals that they want to achieve during education, they construct learning strategies that are optimal for them, they put effort into learning and they exhibit behaviours that are intended to lead to a positive outcome⁸⁾. From the point of view of computer skills training the process is summarised in a symbolic sentence and presented in the diagram below (fig. 1).

The last but hardly less important of the factors constituting the presented theory of motivation is related to the rewarding results of learning that are subjectively classified as success or failure⁹⁾. The evaluation of the actions undertaken is greatly influenced by one's social environment – respect of the family, astonishment of the grandchildren, the peers' willingness to imitate as well as the participants of the course as a group that one can relate to. That is reflected in the seniors willingness to maintain contacts with the people that they met during the process

⁷⁾ Ibid., p. 69.

⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 70.

⁹⁾ Ibid., p. 70.

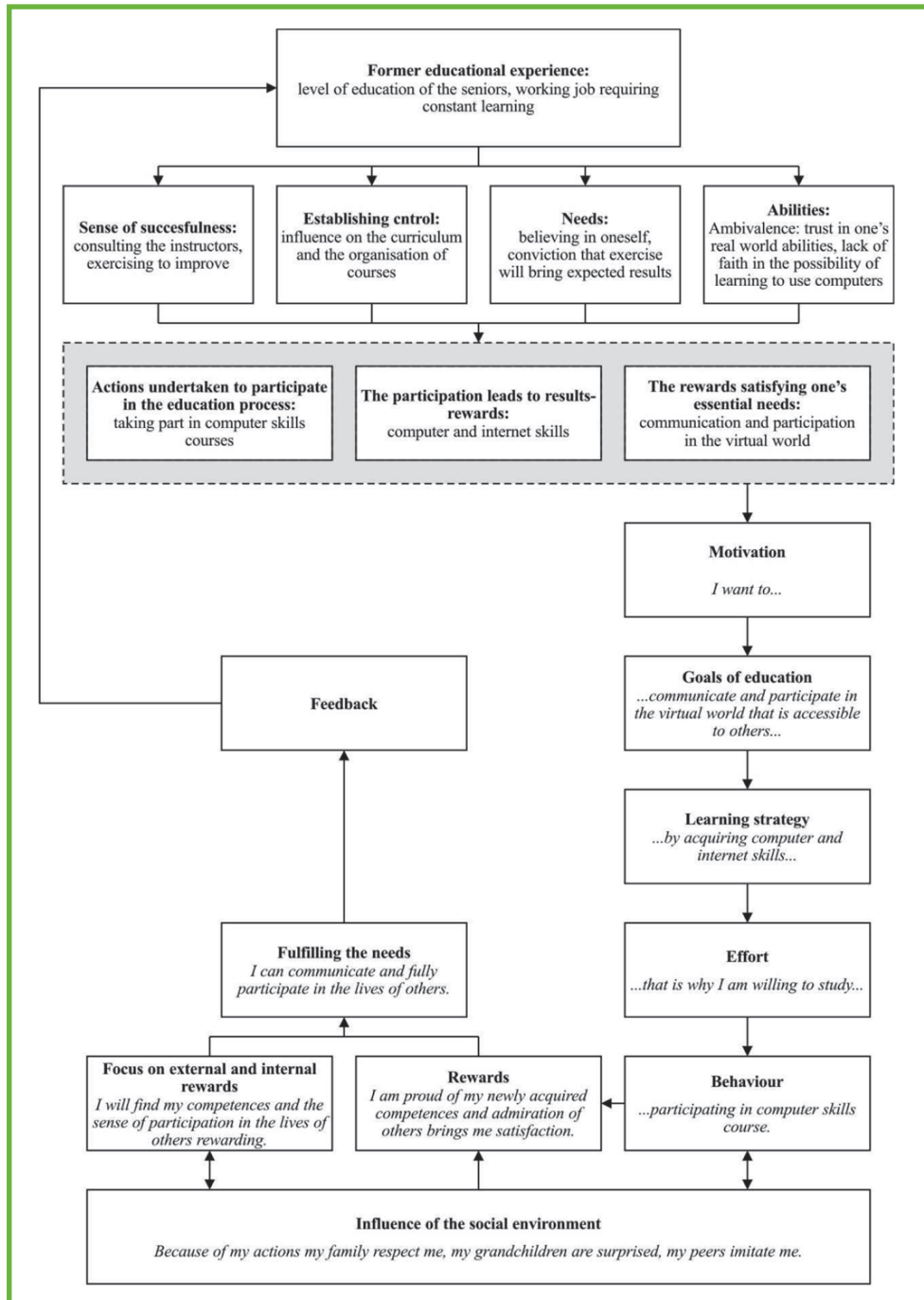


Fig. 1. Diagram of seniors' motivation in computer skills training

Source: Developed by the author on the basis of M. Malewski, *Teorie andragogiczne*, Wrocław 1998, p. 68.

of education. The awareness of the effort that one has to make on the way between turning the computer on for the first time and establishing independent information exchange by means of email that is common to these people seems to be of crucial importance in this aspect. Positive evaluation of one's experiences reflected in the feedback result in the willingness to participate in further, more advanced computer skills courses.

During the *@ktywny Senior* project the participants were asked the following question: "What encouraged you to enter computer and internet skills training?". The aim of the question was to study the participants' motivation and the answers fall into a number of groups.

There were numerous answers indicating that seniors with no acquired competences to use modern devices are marginalised and excluded from the group of people close to them (the family) as well as professional relations. One person stated: "My grandchildren relate to computers all the time. They play games, they solve tasks, they discuss what they found on the internet. And I have no idea what they're talking about". One of the seniors addressed the problem of marginalisation in the following way: "At work everyone uses the internet to send information nowadays, and I can't do it yet, which is why I'm often excluded from many projects. It's happened recently that I wasn't even asked to deal with a problem that was being discussed in my presence because of this. My previous competences just aren't enough, one has to move on". Many of the professionally active seniors emphasise the necessity to acquire computer skills because of their jobs. Some even point out that the impulse to sign up for the course was "the need to use computers proficiently at work, which is of great advantage in my job. I am fully professionally active". Some seniors also suggest outright that they want to join the society that uses computers: "I want to join the ranks of computer users – I'm moving on". Some perceive their lack of computer skills as a type of dependency. They emphasise the necessity to acquire these skills on a level allowing them not to ask their families for help; they state that they were motivated by "the willingness to use computers without my son's help". They also talk of the discomfort caused by the constant need to ask someone for help: "my grandchildren do it all so fast... they click here, they click there and all's done, and I still understand nothing and I can't cope by myself. I'd like to understand it all, so I don't have to call them to help me all the time".

Many of the seniors are motivated by curiosity. One of the women states that she was motivated by "the willingness to prove myself, to believe in myself despite my advanced age. Curiosity to learn something new and unknown, to overcome the fear of the modern devices. Being accepted by all my family and securing the appliances at hand". For some of the others the course was an opportunity to "get to know the world, devices, and people, and to make life easier".

The seniors often speak of the omnipresence of computers; it is suggested that their motivation is constituted by:

- "the progress all around me, at work and in everyday life",

- “professional needs and, on the other hand, the necessity to get to know that which my children already learn about”,
- “everyday life and the need to use computers each day”.

Some of the seniors adopted the strategy of buying a computer first and then signing up for the course to acquire the skills necessary to make use of it for fear of breaking the device. That is what they themselves labelled “self-motivation”, declaring that “since I’ve already spent so much money, I must learn to use the device. Earlier I didn’t want to learn using my children’s computer because I was afraid I could break or delete something. But now I can practise slowly by myself, I get to know my computer, I know where everything is. It’s much better this way”.

A few of the seniors pointed out that their motivation was the willingness establish remote communication via instant messengers. “My children have moved out, my son and daughter have gone to England, I miss them, but I can’t afford to call them as often as I’d like to”.

One of the women talked of a very interesting motivating factor. She signed up for the course because of one simple reason – to learn how to turn off the computer belonging to her granddaughter who, according to the senior, spent too much time using it and would never listen to what her grandmother was saying. One day the irritated senior simply unplugged the device, causing the girl to criticise and complain, because something could be have been broken. As a result the woman signed up for the course in order to participate in it as long as it takes to learn to turn the computer off safely. The anecdote was told as a joke at the end of the course, and the senior was really surprised to have found using the computer so interesting. She was amused, because she thought that now the granddaughter had a problem and could not keep the grandmother away from the computer.

Another interesting story was told by one of the participants of the course – a retired teacher. In her case the children went away on holiday leaving the grandmother to take care of the flat and the pets. There was a computer in the flat so the senior without much thinking came to the conclusion that since the children made it necessary for her to take the dogs out she in return will use the computer. Without telling anyone she signed up for the course.

Expectations and postulates

At the start of the course each of the participants had certain expectations closely connected to motivation and constituting a reflection of the sense of successfulness, control and the needs (fig. 1). An answer to the question about the seniors’ reasons for participating in computer skills courses – “...it took a long time for me to make the decision and I finally decided because I read the advertisement in a Wrocław newspaper about recruitment for a course for seniors. For seniors, I emphasise, because I expected the information to be administered in a manner allowing me to understand and memorise it and I wasn’t disappointed” – may serve as an example. The answer is a perfect illustration of the fact that seniors perceive themselves

as a separate group – one of different needs related to computer skills training. The methods and ways of explaining that are normally used with other age groups cannot be employed in this case.

At the beginning of the classes the seniors pointed out that they expected "...a course tailored for seniors with consideration for our perceptive abilities, our pace of work, and our already poorer memory". It is, therefore, essential that matching the curriculum and the teaching methods to the needs of people of advanced age be taken into consideration while organising such classes. That is why the expectations of the seniors were being constantly monitored throughout the course, with their suggestions heard and implemented.

Yet another crucial problem pointed out by the seniors in the surveys was their expectation that during the computer skills course they may get rid of the fear of using the device in question. Many of the interlocutors said: "I have a computer at home, but this is all so complicated, something pops up all the time and I'm afraid to touch it, so that something doesn't pop up again and that nothing breaks. I don't want to be afraid of all this". The answer, as well as many similar ones, indicates that one of the main problems impeding individual acquisition of computer skills is the fear of breaking the complicated device. Furthermore, many of the seniors suggest that the fear is growing because of the younger family members. "My grandchildren are impatient, if I don't know something they click fast 10 times and it's all done, and I ask them to explain and do everything slowly, and they say I shouldn't because I can break it".

The seniors would also address the issue of the traits of the instructors conducting such courses. The first trait was patience, the second – mentioned almost as often – openness. The seniors pointed out that it is necessary to "employ instructors who are open, outgoing, and nice". Others wrote that "we, as people of advanced age, must be approached in an accessible manner". However, most of the statements made by the participants were of a general nature – "[the instructors] need good teaching training and good knowledge of the subject matter and they need to be real lecturers".

The last of the issues pointed out by the seniors in the first survey was the textbook. One of the seniors wrote: "It'd like the course to be accompanied by a textbook in which everything that we have to do is described step by step and in an understandable way. I once tried to learn to use the computer, I bought a textbook in a bookshop, a textbook for seniors, but I didn't understand anything. I'd like the computer terms to be explained in an accessible way, using understandable language, not the computer one". This presented a challenge for the people organising the computer skills courses; the team decided to respond to it and prepared a textbook for seniors, with its consecutive chapters distributed during the classes.

The second survey contained questions requiring more detailed answers related to the evaluation of the previous classes.

The most important of the expectations pointed out by the seniors was the need for a slow pace of work combined with constant revision of the skills and information which resulted in devoting many more hours to computer skills training classes.

In one of the surveys one can read that it is necessary to "lower the pace of instruction from time to time and devote more time to practise the skills with the help of an instructor". One of the women wrote: "I believe that the plan of the course, I mean the number of classes of the course for seniors who have only had their first contact with computers is insufficient, taking into account their poorer memory. In light of the above it is my opinion that some of the classes could be organised twice. Looking for websites and using web search engines could be revised". Another person states that: "Having introduced new information and having done the first exercise, the next class should be devoted to revision of the information in order to memorise it. The information is given too fast". Yet another statement illustrating the aforementioned need says: "The discussed subjects should be revised once or twice in order to memorise them, because our memory is good, but at the same time short, so we need time to assimilate information". The sentence: "Perhaps we should slow down; the pace of the classes is suitable for young students, and we are all beyond that group" serves as good illustration.

However, slowing down cannot interfere with the curriculum. In relation to this problem, the seniors propose two options. Most of them advocate prolonging the course. One of the participants went as far as to suggest that there should be "more classes, even if the participants had to pay a little more. We need more classes devoted to the internet". This proves that the demand for computer skills training courses is so great that the seniors are actually willing to pay more for them. Some of them proposed that organising consultations might be a good idea: "I think that after the end of the course there should be some classes aimed at partial revision, preferably individual classes with an instructor".

Many of the participants said that they thought the curriculum was extensive, yet none of them proposed to omit certain subjects; to the contrary – the seniors suggested devoting more class time to certain issues. One person states that it is expected that "the duration of the course be prolonged and made to fit the extensiveness of the curriculum and introducing revision". The ideas were manifest in the aforementioned fragments; I do, however, believe that it is necessary to list the issues appearing repeatedly in the surveys. One of the participants suggests: „For people over 60 it is harder to acquire technical knowledge. The training should include more classes devoted to using computers. We need more time to practise making new folders and saving data on flash drives". The request to devote more time to saving data on flash drives was repeated numerous during the classes as well as in the conducted surveys. This leads to the conclusion that acquiring that skill is a source of problems for people of advanced age.

Many of the seniors expected that more time be devoted to operations connected with folders; it was their opinion that the instructors should repeatedly discuss "creating folders, saving documents to folders and to flash drives, and printing". Few asked to spend more time "working with windows, and Word" as well as "inserting charts and objects".

However, almost all of the answers indicated a "hunger for the internet". I believe that it may be proposed that it is a natural result of the motivation in the form of communication on the internet with remote family members and friends that was mentioned by the seniors. During the classes the seniors would often express their joy of being able to have conversations with their relatives using programmes such as Skype or Gadu-Gadu without anyone's help and of establishing an exchange of letters via email. That is why listing expectations connected to these means of communication should come as no surprise. The seniors asked to "devote at least a little more time to the Gadu-Gadu programme, using email and internet browsers". A conclusion may be drawn from the answers that the seniors consulted their actions on the internet with other people, because of such requests as "Gmail account registration" when a different email account was used for registration during the classes. The seniors were not only interested in "GG and Skype, and sending emails", but also in "sending emails with attachments". One of the participants pointed out that "more time should be devoted to the internet, downloading image files and attachments, but that requires more work on the internet, and I don't have an internet connection". Since the lack of internet connection at home was a problem for many of the participants of the course Sektor 3 made it possible for them to use the computers with internet access individually and without supervision. Many of the participants took advantage of that opportunity.

Furthermore, the seniors expected "first of all, an in-depth (dogłębszej¹⁰⁾) knowledge about using websites, e.g. starting bank accounts, logging on at Allegro and many other operations with access to images or TV. More practical computer skills". Many of them wrote that they expected the subject of further study to be "the internet, downloading programmes from the internet (for free)". Among them there were a few answers related to using the internet in a safe way and "how to prevent weird images from popping up". One of the women stated: "I would like to know how to turn on a filter so that no such 'pussy cats' ever pop up". The answer addressed an event that took place during one of the classes – the one devoted to downloading and saving image files from the internet. The seniors were to find an image of their favourite pet that they saw as the most interesting. One of the participants typed "pussy cat" in the web search engine, and then on the screen there appeared naked girls instead of cute pets. The senior was further embarrassed because of the fact that he was sitting in the front row and his computer screen was visible to all the other students. Eventually the instructor was able to turn the incident into an educationally beneficial situation, the result of which being the expectation to broaden the knowledge of internet security related issues, as emphasised by the seniors.

In the surveys the seniors express their willingness to learn to use computers other than the PCs available in the lab. They make it clear that it is necessary to

¹⁰⁾ As in the original.

devote "at least one class to the use of notebooks, to present to possibilities of using them". Another person points out: "I would like to have an opportunity to come to an individual class with my laptop. During the regular classes that would make too much fuss, but later the instructor could show me the similarities and, last but not least, the differences". The seniors also propose for the source "to be supplemented with new solutions introduced to computer technologies". They suggest using state-of-the-art technology, as well, as exemplified by the following answer: "In my opinion in order to revise the in-class exercises at home recording the classes on an external memory device – that special drive – would prove useful".

As mentioned above in the answers related to the seniors expectations in the survey that was carried out at the beginning of the course, the instructors prepared the course textbook for each particular class throughout the training. In the second part of the research the seniors were to express their expectations, as well, and to make suggestions regarding the textbook. The seniors stated that it is necessary to "develop a more detailed textbook – for the absolute beginners". Apart from the suggestion that the textbook be more detailed the information that despite making the textbook available the seniors still took their own notes of supplementary character was also provided. The following answer may serve as a good illustration: "It is necessary for the materials that we receive (with the use of the step by step method) to include more detailed information. What is more, the issues related to the use of computers are discussed too fast. One is not always able to put down all that one is to do and then it is impossible to write them all down while at the same doing what one is supposed to do. It must be emphasised that some members of the group have some former experience working with computers and there are also those who use them for the first time". It was also proposed that "the textbook materials that we use in class be distributed earlier, because during the exercises we can't always keep up".

Few of the seniors also addressed the issue of an opportunity to introduce innovation to the training in the form of a slide projector. One of the seniors states: "a screen that the instructor could use to present the consecutive steps would be very useful". Yet another participant writes: "if at all possible, we could use a slide projector and a screen so that the instructor could discuss the particular uses step by step and that everyone could see the discussed topics clearly".

However, the question of the necessity to learn English language was raised more often. The seniors were aware of the lack of this competence from the very beginning of the classes when they had to deal with only a few English terms. One can notice the fact that younger people who are proficient at using computers and computer-related devices have already acquired some of the necessary vocabulary. Terms and names such as "flash drive, Windows, Office", etc. are words that are common among computer users. However, for seniors they constitute a completely foreign addition to the learning of computer skills. That is why in the answers of the surveyed the demand for English classes was often put forward. One of the seniors states: "At the beginning there should be a few English classes – to learn computer-related terms. Even a larger number of such classes, so that it can

be easier for us to memorise the terms that are introduced. Not all of the participants have a computer at home and it is not easy for everyone to constantly revise all this". Among the opinions of the seniors there are some propositions to organise a full English language course as well as suggestions to only learn the most important expressions. One of the participants of the project states: "During the first class the teacher should introduce the basic English terms needed to use computers to the seniors, which would make it easier for everyone to communicate using computers". Some of the participants realise the necessity to study foreign languages and counting on the chance to have such education introduced as part of the project they wrote: "English classes should be organised at the beginning of the course, not at the end – that is because of the abbreviations used in working with computers".

Yet another conclusion that can be drawn from the results of the conducted research is the fact that the seniors expect further computer skills courses to be organised. Even during the *@ktywny Senior* project it was emphasised that they would not be satisfied with only one computer skills course. One of the seniors pointed out that "the computer skills training courses could be organised once more", and in the rest of the answers the seniors suggested that during the courses they would like to go beyond the beginner level. Nevertheless, the propositions were quite varied. Some stated that they simply want "to participate in further stages of the computer skills course". Some also suggested that an „upper-beginner level" should be organised and it should be "a computer skills course for those who have a little basic knowledge, but who still do not have full confidence in their skills". There were also some answers proposing that "the individual interests of the participants should be made part of the course curriculum" instead of organising further training. One of the seniors contributed an interesting idea: "We would need a second level (!) course. Here we learn the basics, but there are many other possibilities that we have not learned of, e.g. addressing envelopes, creating business cards, invitations (in many sizes), etc.". It appears that seniors seek and find more and more possibilities of putting the acquired knowledge to practical use. One of the seniors proposed outright to "introduce single-subject courses" based on the seniors' interests. Furthermore, the idea came up to organise groups of different levels – to "select teams depending on the level of proficiency of their computer skills".

In the surveys conducted during the second part of the research some of the participants have also proposed changes to be introduced to the course in its entirety, with the possibility "to consult the dates and times of the classes with the students, so that they can organise their own time" seemingly essential to the seniors. Furthermore, in the future "the course schedule should be prepared so that there are no breaks longer than 15 minutes between the classes". The last proposition related to that subject was "to organise the classes every other day or 3 times a week. Having classes every day is hard for the seniors because of the time it requires and they need more time for everyday work at home".

The *@ktywny Senior* project in its 180 hours of computer skills training course classes was conducted by a team of experienced instructors – members

of Stowarzyszenie AVEC. Most of the members of the staff were graduates and doctoral studies students of andragogics at the Institute of Pedagogics of the University of Wrocław. Due to the fact that none of the instructors, who study, teach, and work on regular basis, could take three months off the teaching hours were split between them and a formalised report system was introduced to allow for a fast exchange of detailed information. The seniors' opinions of the changing of teachers would vary. Some of them claimed that such a form of organisation allows for the establishing of communication with each senior – "since the teachers change, there is a good contact with everyone. Because you can never satisfy everybody and if someone didn't like a particular instructor he would be unhappy throughout the entire course. I think it should stay the same for the rest of the course". However, the majority of seniors stated that "all classes with a group should be conducted by one teacher exclusively. It would be great if a group was taken care of by the same instructor from the beginning to the end". The evaluation of teacher's assistants in the course was also positive. "Voluntary workers are wonderful, because the teacher cannot take care of everything by himself, taking into account that most of the seniors don't have computers at home".

Demands related to the instructors constituted a separate, broad category. The traits that are expected of a good instructor can be categorised here in detail; the traits are as follow, starting with the most important ones:

- 1) openness and the ability to share knowledge easily,
- 2) commitment and helpfulness,
- 3) patience and understanding,
- 4) kindness and the ability to create a pleasant atmosphere,
- 5) the ability to manage group work and time effectively,
- 6) professionalism,
- 7) the ability to express oneself beautifully.

Throughout the conducted research the seniors described the aforementioned traits of an instructor in detail, and the traits that they enumerated could all be placed precisely into the above categories. That is why I have decided to illustrate the emphasis that the seniors put on the particular traits by means of a diagram (fig. 2).

In relation to communication the seniors pointed out "the ability to communicate effectively with people of advanced age" as the most important trait of a good instructor. The classes should therefore be conducted in a way that "allows an average senior to understand everything" and that is "clear and interesting for a layman". Openness was often emphasised by an especially difficult student that the seniors believe they are – one of the participants points out: "We are not young students; to the contrary, we all live on 'scholarships' from ZUS (Social Insurance Institution)". That is why the instructors conducting courses for seniors should "be able to share their knowledge with people of advanced age in a simple and understandable way". The instructors need to have "the ability to transfer information to others" and avoid "monologues typical of lectures where no contact with the students is established. Seniors should not be treated like university students, establishing a barrier between

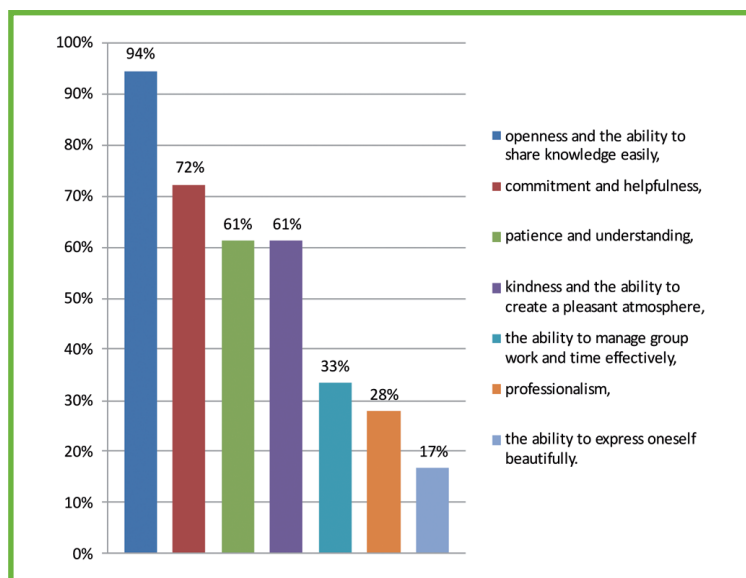


Fig. 2. The demands related to the traits of the instructors of computer skills courses for seniors

Source: Compiled by the author.

the teacher and the audience". Some went as far as to suggest "the using of a method of direct contact with the course participants, which makes it possible to really acquire practical skills". A good instructor should "try to keep explaining until everyone understands and be patient while teaching, because we aren't youngsters anymore". Therefore, the trait that is most important for the seniors is "clarity and intelligibility of information transfer" as well as providing "expressive and vivid elucidations" and "precise and comprehensive explanations".

In the second group commitment and helpfulness are included. Since, as pointed out earlier, the surveys were distributed twice, with the present part related to the answers received from the participants during the course, in the hereby discussion the demand resulting from the evaluation of the instructors conducting the classes up to the point of the second survey is clearly manifest. It is reflected in, for instance, the answer demanding that the instructors "conduct the class in such a way that the seniors may feel that he is trying hard, even it isn't working perfectly". Therefore, seniors expect "commitment to sharing knowledge and teaching the classes"; they want the instructor to express "enthusiasm and zeal". The attitude of commitment is to be expressed through "the readiness to help everyone individually during classes"; it also turns out that it is expected that the teachers „help in individual exercises taking place on the ground floor"¹¹⁾.

¹¹⁾ The regular course classes would take place in the computer lab situated on the first floor, with the seniors being allowed to do exercises using the computers located in the main room of the Sektor 3 located on the mentioned ground floor.

As to the informative aspects of the course the participants demand help in "using the computers (the order of operations in a particular exercise)" and "correct data entering" as well as "giving additional information and tips in the most difficult exercises" along with support "when a participant is at a loss and clicks in a wrong place – tips how to solve the problem, rather than just solving it – for example, I would like to know what I did wrong". It may, therefore, be stated that in the opinion of the seniors commitment is often expressed by "being helpful".

As to the seniors' emphasis on the particular traits of the instructors patience and understanding along with kindness and the ability to create a pleasant atmosphere take the third and fourth place. Within the first category the seniors expect "patience and understanding of seniors whose mind is not as open to the issues of new technology as before". The answers in this category were formulated in quite an interesting way – just like in the case of the one quoted above – the seniors described their expectations while justifying the importance that they attach to them at the same time. In the justifications it was mentioned that seniors "are not as quick as the young and sometimes lack openness"; that they are among people "learning to use computers, and the participants are often nearly 80"; they are also people who "have never had any contact with computers before" and who are "full of doubts related to the use of computers and the internet". Furthermore, one needs "a lot of understanding for the seniors who don't always 'get' the computer-related information and they should receive help in situations when they can't do something on their own"; which is also because "our minds are not as agile as they used to be in our youth". Certain elements of evaluation of the hitherto classes are to be found in this category. One of the seniors wrote: "I admire these young people who repeated the same fragments of classes 8–10 times, because one of the 'active seniors' didn't understand something". Therefore, the seniors expect "a lot of composure while conducting the classes and patience for our complaining and constant questioning" in this category.

Regarding kindness and the ability to create a pleasant atmosphere an instructor should be characterised by "nice and polite disposition" as well as "good manners and a smile" and "a friendly manner in relations with seniors". Furthermore, it is necessary for the teacher to have such qualities as "propriety and a specific, patient attitude" and never to cease to be so, never to show anger or irritation, "because during the classes it was us who were impatient and who sometimes felt irritated when we didn't understand something". One of the seniors states: "Classes with instructors should be greatly pleasant and encourage one to discover further secrets of computers". "Friendly demeanour and understanding that in our age information is transferred much more slowly than in the case of young people" are also expected. Elements of evaluation are to be found in this category, as well, as exemplified by the answers: "The smile and cheerfulness of the teacher are an encouragement to understand the tasks better" and "the nice and quiet atmosphere give one confidence to ask questions related to the smallest of issues". It may therefore

be stated that the ability to create an atmosphere of kindness, calm, and security results in complete or partial relief of seniors' anxiety, and it is precisely the feeling of insecurity that constitutes the factor that blocks the motivation of people in late adulthood in relation to computer skills training.

The ability to manage group work and time effectively mentioned by the seniors take the fifth place. It was in this category that one of the participants suggested that a good instructor should "conduct the classes in such a way that we get to have that break¹²⁾, the classes shouldn't be prolonged". Furthermore, it is essential that "the devoted time be adjusted to the level of skills of the participants" and that "it is made sure that the discussed task is displayed on all the computer screens before moving on to further exercises". It is also necessary for the instructors to conduct "control of the understanding of the tasks and information by the participants" and to adjust themselves "to the students, with the use of the step-by-step method". The teacher should maintain "good contact with the group", but at the same time needs to be "constructive, demanding and consistent, matter-of-fact, and keep the necessary distance". The instructor must also express "interest in all of the participants of the training, but in such a way as to divide his time fairly, without devoting too much of it to only a number of students". The last issue appears to be of crucial importance, because seniors are a group that is extremely sensitive to all forms of discrimination. In an event of one of the participants feeling ignored by an instructor – regardless of whether such an opinion has factual justification, or not – the result is immediate and it is usually expressed in the form of blocking oneself from the teacher. If the instructor does not notice such behaviour soon enough to react and to explain it may even lead to the senior in question quitting the course.

Contrary to what one may expect, professionalism did not turn out to be the most important trait for the seniors. Only six people mentioned the issue and they would usually restrict themselves to statements like "the teacher should be professional" or "the instructor should have an extensive professional knowledge". Once again one could find elements of evaluation of the hitherto classes in one of the opinions expressed in the following answer that is to serve as an example: "I sense the talent of a computer specialist in him. He's always well-prepared for the classes and he knows what he's talking about; he tries to give us as much information as possible, but we can't always remember everything. He must work some more with people who have never had the contact with computer-related issues before". The attitude of people of advanced age towards the teachers conducting the courses is expressed in the opinion that in the way they run the classes there should be "more explaining and less clicking" and that they "shouldn't do anything for the participants. The students have to solve problems on their own. The teachers

¹²⁾ The course was organised in blocks of two classes with a break of 15 minutes, when the participants could leave their desks, go for a walk, or get a little physical exercise.

should only provide information". It may, therefore, be proposed that while the seniors do point out the importance of the feature of professionalism, in the broad sense of the term, they at the same time qualify it as secondary to openness and the ability to share knowledge effectively. On the basis of the observations made and the conversation conducted during the computer skills classes it may be stated that seniors might even be anxious of too high a professionalism, since many of them emphasised that professional computer technicians do not want to or cannot explain certain issues in a manner allowing an older person to understand and they resolve to using professional jargon instead.

The last trait mentioned by the participants of the course in their answers is "good, clear pronunciation" of the instructors as well as "a strong voice and the ability to express oneself nicely". The aforementioned statements are quite interesting since none of the instructors had any speech defects. Placing this group of traits in a subcategory of propriety should be taken into consideration.

Conclusion

Everyday utterances of seniors are an expression of a great need to participate in all forms of the currently available channels of communication, which have changed enormously with the development of information technology. The inability to follow that development results in the marginalisation of people of advanced age that is experienced by the seniors themselves as well as by their environment: within their families, at work, and among friends. However – as proven by the greatly positive reception of the *@ktywny Senior* project among seniors – the marginalisation can be prevented. T. Dyrda argued that the noticing of the need to balance progress and the actions undertaken in the world of technology in connection to this problem make it possible to believe that adult education through engagement in the issue may in a way support the tendencies to try to make technology more humane¹³⁾.

Seniors are special students who are characterised by a high level of commitment, and teaching them may definitely be a source of enormous satisfaction. The attitude of the seniors participating in the computer skills training course can be summed up in a statement constituting a reconstruction of the survey answers: "I want to communicate and participate in the virtual world, accessible to others, by acquiring computer and internet skills, which is why I am ready to study while participating in the computer skills training course. Because of my actions my family respect me, my grandchildren are surprised, my peers imitate me. I will find my competences and the sense of participation in the lives of others rewarding. I am proud of my newly acquired competences and admiration of others brings me satisfaction. I can communicate and fully participate in the lives of others".

¹³⁾ T. Dyrda, *Równoważenie postępu cywilizacji a edukacja dorosłych*, [in:] J. Saran (ed.), *Edukacja dorosłych. Teoria i praktyka w okresie przemian*, Lublin 2000, p. 78.

The above statement is a part of the outline presenting the seniors' motivation to participate in computer skills training (fig. 1). The analysis of the answers presented above provides further details of the expectations and demands of the „@ctive Seniors”. Both the issues are combined to form feedback proving the existence of a great demand for computer skills courses in this numerous age group. Furthermore, it is a group that is highly motivated; it is a group of people willing to learn and determined to gain knowledge and skills actively, systematically, and with commitment in order to be able to once again fully participate in the life of the society. What is more... or perhaps – most importantly – they provide an answer to the question: in what way can the marginalisation of seniors be prevented with the help of computer skills training?

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Computer skills training course for seniors – experience gained from the *@ktywny Senior* project

Summary: For a few years the problems of promoting active living and education among seniors has been a source of great interest of educators representing diverse scholarly branches as well as those undertaking various actions aimed at people of advanced age. Posing questions related to the system of education of seniors while seeking answers to them in the experience gained from undertaken actions constitutes a contemporary issue of particular importance. It is, therefore, made possible to constantly improve the quality of education and to conduct an ongoing evaluation of the teaching methods used in order to optimise them.

The present article is an attempt at joining the discussion on the subject of the promotion of active use of computer skills among seniors. The experience gained during the *@ktywny Senior* project constitutes the basis of the analysis and the subject matter of the present article.

The subject of the article is directly related to the carrying out and the methodology of the computer skills workshops organised as part of the discussed project. In the subsequently presented parts such issues as: plan of the computer skills training course, the space of the computer lab, rules of the education of seniors, the aims and the curriculum, plan of the classes, methods and forms of teaching are discussed. The article is completed with a presentation of the teaching materials.

Key words: New technology, computer skills workshops, seniors, education of seniors, process of the education of seniors, computer skills training course for seniors, active senior, promoting active living among the 50+ generation, continued education, geronto-pedagogy.

The 21st century, though variously defined and instantiated, is commonly associated with an ongoing development of modern technology. What is important, however, is the fact that computers are increasingly more available. Such situation is a source of a number of changes both at the micro- and macro-social levels. Living in the modern world requires openness to innovation and change on a level that was not required thousands, hundreds, and even tens of years ago¹. The inability of an individual or entire societies to follow the changing reality may lead to marginalisation.

Continued education is as strength and a value that may allow an individual to fully integrate with reality. However, the promotion and forming of the adjustment of knowledge as well as providing conditions necessary to for its fulfilment present a challenge to contemporary education. The process should lead to the broadening of knowledge and development of competences and skills. It should bring modernity closer. It should allow for a comprehension of contemporary civilisation and technology².

The group that especially needs help and support in the dynamic process of the development of reality are, among others, seniors³. The instability of social behaviour, the fast technological progress, the changing trends, way of life, and even everyday language lead to the isolation and marginalisation of people of advanced age⁴.

¹) M. Ułaszewska, M. Żuk, *Starość jako etap rozwoju człowieka*, [in:] U. Dębska (ed.), *Blżej człowieka. Konteksty interdyscyplinarne*, Wrocław 2006, p. 132.

²) Cf. O. Czerniawska, *Wokół edukacji osób starszych*, „Acta Universitatis Lodziensis Folia Pedagogica” 2003, Issue 5, p. 158.

³) It is difficult to provide an unambiguous definition of the category of senior age due to the variety of criteria determining its onset. A starting event of the period of the so-called late adulthood is usually the moment of retirement, that is the age of about 60–65. Most often it is assumed that the age of 60–75 is the period of early old age, 75–90 constitutes advanced old age, with the age of over 90 being the late old age, the age of longevity. (J. Janiszewska-Rain, *Okres późnej dorosłości. Jak rozpoznać ryzyko i jak pomagać?*, [in:] A.I. Brzezińska (ed.), *Psychologiczne portrety człowieka*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 595).

In the present article the term „senior” signifies a retired person. The terms „person of the third age” and „person of advanced age” are also used.

⁴) M. Ułaszewska, M. Żuk, op.cit., p. 132.

Nevertheless, over the last few years one could clearly observe the need and the willingness of individual development among seniors. A growing number of people of the so-called third age seek new areas of activity: intellectual, cultural, social, and physical ones; they are also willing to benefit from the opportunities provided for them. At the same time, seniors share their experience and knowledge of life which not only makes them an example to their peers but also compels admiration and gains respect of the members of younger generations.

In relation to the above issues the promotion of active living among seniors as well as providing them with opportunities for development, in the broad sense of the term, i.e. psychological and individual development, self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-realisation, etc. constitute an important area of educational activity.

While concentrating on the subject matter and the aims of this book, which is the presentation of the results of the *@ktywny Senior* project, in the present article the emphasis is put on the methodology of computer skills training of people of late adulthood. That is why the most important issues regarding the organisation and the conducting of the beginner level computer skills workshops are discussed herein, with the teaching materials presented to complete it. All the discussed problems are related to the education of people of the third age. The experience gained while conducting the aforementioned project constitutes the source of the presented information.

The book is especially intended for instructors and people conducting computer skills training courses for seniors as well as organisations and associations working with seniors. On the other hand, the information contained in the present book may serve as a proof of the so-called "good practice", which is what undoubtedly characterised the *@ktywny Senior* project; it is also a recognition of all the seniors who participated in the project and their attitude and commitment that showed just how valuable and needed such activities are. The present article is, therefore, to be seen first and foremost as an inspiration for further work.

Organisation of the computer skills training course

The planning and organisation stage as well as conducting the training aimed at seniors is closely connected with the knowledge of the needs, and the intellectual, psychological, and physical potential and abilities of people of the third age.

It must be taken into account that the seniors who participate in various projects tailored for them usually constitute the elite among the members of their age group: they make an individual decision to participate in the classes, they have wisdom and a broad knowledge of life, they are willing to share their experience (regardless of their education)⁵⁾.

⁵⁾ The statement is a general conclusion formulated on the basis of the various types of projects aimed at seniors and organised in Wrocław. It must be taken into account that the so-called „active seniors” despite the aforementioned trait do not constitute a uniform group. A general image of a senior-participant of activities aimed at people of advanced age cannot be defined. Cf. J. Golonka, *Kurs obsługi komputera jako forma inicjacji informatycznej seniora na przykładzie słuchaczy Uniwersytetu*

What is the issue of crucial importance here is that seniors are a very demanding audience and the entire process of education is highly individualised.

The instructor staff of the computer skills training courses organised as part of the @ktywny Senior project was made up of undergraduate and doctoral studies students of pedagogics at the University of Wrocław who specialise in adult education and implement various projects aimed at seniors.

The "instructor training meeting" organised at the beginning of the course was a stage of crucial importance; it was devoted to the methodology of the classes and discussion of the curriculum. It was aimed at determining and standardising the details of the plan and the conducting of the computer skills training course and agreeing on the curriculum⁶⁾ by all teachers taking part in the course.

Employing such strategy is necessary in a situation when the training is conducted by a number of different people (as in the case of the discussed course). Accepting one plan to be consistently implemented by all of the instructors (starting at the very beginning of the course) is directly related to the need for balance, as clearly expressed by seniors. What is more, the idea here is to standardise the material aspect of the classes (providing an answer to the question: how do we conduct the classes?) and formulating the information to be taught (providing an answer to the question: what do we teach?). The pace of the classes is determined by the intellectual, psychological, and physical abilities of the members of particular groups. Furthermore, it is always adjusted to the people who have the most problems acquiring new information.

Yet another issue connected with the organisation of the classes is dividing the participants into groups. The essential problem is the size of each group. There should not be more than 8 people in a group. Such number allows for the individualisation of the training. Nevertheless, the participants of the @ktywny Senior project were divided into 6 groups of 10 people each. Raising the number of participants was made possible by the voluntary workers who took part in the project and who supported the process of education during the classes (individual help in completing the tasks).

During the stage of forming of the groups such factors as the level of proficiency in using computers, age, and gender need to be taken into account. Firstly, a group should be made up of people at a similar level of proficiency which allows for a much better fulfilling of the needs of particular participants of the course. Secondly, a group should be made up of people of similar age, which allows for the using of teaching methods and techniques that are sufficient for the intellectual,

Trzeciego Wieku w Uniwersytecie Wrocławskim, [in:] L. Jakubowska-Malicka, A. Kobylarek, M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska, *Audiowizualność. Cyberprzestrzeń, Hipertekstualność. Ponowoczesne konteksty edukacji*, Wrocław 2009, p. 295–298.

⁶⁾ The computer skills training curriculum that was used in the project had been successfully implemented for years at the University of the Third Age at the University of Wrocław and developed by one of the instructors.

psychological, and physical abilities of its members. Thirdly, despite the differences in how men and women learn, the groups should be heterogeneous in order to exercise positive influence on the atmosphere of the classes and to encourage communication, in the broad sense of the word.

Unfortunately, in relation to the aforementioned activities, it was not possible to create groups uniform as to the level of proficiency of all their members. Nevertheless, the adaptability and diversity of the teaching methods and the variety of exercises allowed for a fluent carrying out of the training.

While planning a computer skills training course it is necessary to make it possible for the participants of the workshops to have free access to computers outside the classes in order for them to practise the formerly acquired skills. In the case of the *@ktywny Senior* project the above condition was met.

Before the start of the course such issues as the duration of the classes (each meeting lasting 2×45 minutes) and of the breaks (15 minutes) and the weekly schedule of the workshops (each group meeting 2 or 3 times a week) had to be considered. The number of hours devoted to computer skills training of seniors was originally determined by the organisers of the entire project (30 classes).

The *@ktywny Senior* project was characterised by the so-called group rotation – the classes were conducted by a number of different instructors. That is why establishing communication between the teachers became an issue of crucial importance. In relation to the discussed project it was decided that so-called class reports were to be written. It was made obligatory for all the instructors to prepare a detailed description of the workshops classes conducted on each day with a particular group. It was necessary to address such issues as revision (description of the progress of learning, pinpointing the observed problems), the information introduced (emphasising the elements that require additional attention and concentration of the teacher because of the difficulty in understanding that the seniors have), the general atmosphere of the class, and propositions of further work in the report.

Furthermore, throughout the entire project all those who conducted the workshops were to share their experiences up to speed; they would make a combined effort to solve the problems related to giving the classes as well as the changing information that was to be introduced. During the courses it is necessary to take into account the fact that the curriculum may be modified due to the requirement to adjust the discussed subject to the abilities and needs of the participants of the project and the speed at which they acquire information. Yet another essential question is that of the analysis of the workshops in relation to the general atmosphere of the classes (solving the problems together and working out a strategy of dealing with problem situations).

What characterises the *@ktywny Senior* project was the participation of voluntary workers in the computer skills training. What is important, however, is the help in the organisation of the classes that the seniors themselves decided to provide –

the seniors who had taken part in the previous computer skills training courses organised by Wrocławskie Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych (NGOs support centre in Wrocław) – Sektor 3. The commitment of the voluntary workers and their presence during the classes had a major influence on the quality of education. Most of the voluntary workers expressed great empathy in their attitude towards their peers taking part in the arduous task of learning⁷⁾. Nevertheless, it was required of the instructors to control the efforts of the voluntary workers so that they do not perform the tasks given to the students instead of helping them.

The space of the computer lab

The "learning space" plays an essential role in the process of education. It is often that the location determines the successfulness of the undertaken efforts. That is why all possible efforts must be made to secure optimal learning conditions and equipment.

The computer skills training workshops for seniors organised as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project were conducted in the computer lab situated in the modern building of the Wrocławskie Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych (NGOs support centre in Wrocław) Sektor 3. Henceforth, the workshops were carried out in a spacious, light building and room adapted to the needs of the disabled (a lift and a lavatory suited to the needs of the disabled). The room was fitted with computer desks (easy access to each of them) and a board. It was also possible for the instructors to use a copier and a printer⁸⁾.

All the computers were placed on special desks which allowed everyone to take a proper yet comfortable working position (which is of crucial importance during trainings intended for seniors). All the chairs were adjustable. Such elements as mouse settings (the speed of the cursor), regulation of the computer screens (setting contrast and brightness), the font and icon size, placing the shortcuts to the applications used during the classes on the desktops were also taken into account.

The ventilation of the room was yet another important issue. That is why before each class as well as during the breaks it was made sure that the class was properly ventilated. Furthermore, coat hangers were prepared, so that it was possible for everyone to work and study comfortably. During the breaks the seniors had access to drinks machines as well as a water dispenser.

⁷⁾ The answers to the evaluation survey suggest that the participants valued the help of the voluntary workers highly.

⁸⁾ It would have been perfect if it was made possible to use the computer connected to the projector – then the discussion of the particular tasks could have been accompanied by a presentation ("step by step") of each subject. However, due to location and financial reasons such a solution appears to still belong to the future.

The rules of education

In relation to the computer skills training organised as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project the following rules of education were assumed⁹⁾:

- ❖ The rule of meeting high standards of quality of education – resulting from the lack of time to correct the mistakes made during the process of education. The awareness of participating in education of the highest quality makes its participants feel special, "chosen", as it were, among their peers (people of the same age). Therefore, it allows them to construct a positive image of themselves in relation to their age.
- ❖ The rule of addressing the seniors' life experience: using the experience and the knowledge of life as an important source of information and making the participants aware of their value; boosting the seniors' self-esteem.
- ❖ The rule of temporality: the necessity to devote more time to acquisition and completing certain tasks (in the case of seniors the reaction time increases with age, which leads to expanding the time needed to complete intellectual tasks, acquiring, processing, and remembering information). Adapting the time to the abilities of the students.
- ❖ The rule of positive evaluation of the effects of education: promoting the seniors' motivation to learn, boosting the seniors' self-esteem. Nevertheless, the evaluation should be credible; one needs to refrain from excessive rewarding. Specific achievements are to be appreciated.
- ❖ The rule of taking into account the physical condition and health of the seniors: taking special care of the learning conditions and consideration for the rules of organisation of effective intellectual effort.
- ❖ The rule of taking into account the seniors' intellectual abilities: planning and conducting the classes with the use of the step by step method.
- ❖ The rule of practicality: adjusting the introduced information to the performed tasks; learning in the context of the seniors' everyday life needs.

The aims and the curriculum

The aims and curriculum the computer skills training workshops were directly related to the main idea behind the *@ktywny Senior* project – the prevention of marginalisation of seniors¹⁰⁾ as well as the global aims of third age education: helping people of advanced age to understand the world in connection with the ability to interpret it, defeating the acquired helplessness of seniors and overcoming the stereotypical thinking related to the perceived weakness of people of advanced age and the impropriety of certain behaviours, practical implementation

⁹⁾ E. Skibińska, *Proces kształcenia seniorów*, [in:] A. Fabiś (ed.), *Aktywność społeczna, kulturalna i oświatowa seniorów*, Bielsko-Biała 2008, p. 112.

¹⁰⁾ Cf. <http://www.sektor3.wroclaw.pl/forum/topics/1907650:Topic:3680>, retrieved: 10.07.2009.

of the seniors' knowledge¹¹⁾. In relation to the above propositions the following aims of the classes were formulated:

- Teaching elementary practical computer skills¹²⁾.
- Broadening the knowledge related to the possible uses of computers in everyday life.
- Overcoming the anxiety and individual barriers connected with using computers.
- Teaching the user-computer communication and mutual interaction.
- Teaching internet use skills¹³⁾.
- Encouraging curiosity.
- Equalling the seniors' educational chances and promoting active living among them¹⁴⁾.

Furthermore, their scope was related to needs of seniors discussed in reference books: the needs to understand and interpret the world, to have certain skills making everyday life easier, taking care of oneself, and reaching the highest standards connected with the above¹⁵⁾.

Despite the lack of a hierarchy of aims before starting the classes one must bear in mind that the fundamental issue at on all levels of education is overcoming the seniors' anxiety and individual barriers connected with using computers as well as encouraging their curiosity. It is also important for the instructor to remind the participants that it is not possible to acquire all computer skills "perfectly" during just a few classes and that everyone should allow himself time to learn all the tasks.

The curriculum of the computer skills training course for seniors has been developed and adjusted to the above aims of the education as well as the abilities and individual needs of the people of advanced age. The curriculum is described in detail in annex 1. However, it is necessary to provide a comment related to the division as well as the implementation of the particular subjects.

The computer skills training course curriculum was organised and divided into smaller parts (connected with the particular classes). Nevertheless, as I have formerly mentioned, the fundamental rule of the education of seniors is individualisation, which in this case means that the order of acquiring information and skills must be preserved and that the teacher should concentrate on the quality of education rather than the pace at which the information is introduced. That is why the necessary time to be devoted to teaching a certain subject and practicing the particular tasks (curriculum vs. class) must be interpreted as a relative value.

¹¹⁾ E. Skibińska, op.cit., p. 99.

¹²⁾ Among others turning the computer on/off, creating folders and subfolders, the basics of the Word application, text editing, working with clipart objects, chart editing (cf. the workshops curriculum published at the end of the second part of the present book).

¹³⁾ Among others using an internet browser, using web search engines, searching for image files, using email, using instant messengers (cf. the workshops curriculum published at the end of the second part of the present book).

¹⁴⁾ Cf. J. Golonka, op.cit., p. 298.

¹⁵⁾ E. Skibińska, op.cit., p. 100.

During the realisation of the aforementioned project emphasis was put on establishing connections between and integrating the particular subjects within the curriculum – more advanced tasks would always contain elements of previous exercises. That is because such an organisation of the curriculum serves a dual purpose – it allows for the practising of the formerly acquired skills and for the revision of formerly introduced information; it also makes it possible for the instructor to notice “problems” with some of the subjects that might need to be discussed again. The importance of this issue lies in the fact that it provides an opportunity to help teachers assess whether a certain subject was only memorised by the participants of the workshops or if it was understood, as well, which is the very essence and aim of computer skills training.

The selection of the subjects to be included in the curriculum as well as the general level of the introduced information is characterised by practicality – adjusting the subjects of the classes to the needs of the seniors and the skills necessary to make their everyday lives easier.

Plan of the classes

The computer skills training workshops that were organised as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project took place in the morning and in the early afternoon (which is important in the process of the education of seniors). As mentioned previously, the classes took place two or three times a week. The workshops lasted for 1 h 45 minutes.

In the course of the organisation of the classes the necessity to introduce breaks during which all participants would leave the classroom to move around and to get the room ventilated¹⁶⁾, was taken into account. Therefore, the plan of the classes for each group was devised as follows: 45 minutes of class, 15 minutes of break, 45 minutes of class. Each participant received a detailed schedule of the classes which contained information about the dates and times of the particular workshops.

Planning the time was an important element. Basically, each class could be divided into the following mutually complementary parts: greeting the participants, revision of the skills introduced during the previous classes, complementing and broadening the subjects that were already familiar to the seniors; exercises, individual work, solving individual problems; the break; introducing new information in relation to the previously acquired skills (the pace individually adjusted to each group), establishing connection between the newly introduced knowledge to the information already learned; exercises; question time.

¹⁶⁾ Changing the position of the body prevents cramps and improves blood circulation, which is especially important for people of advanced age. The regular ventilation of the classroom had a beneficial influence on the conditions of further work. What is more, the friendly conversations that took place during the breaks created a pleasant atmosphere.

In this case the individualisation of the education process must be once again emphasised¹⁷⁾. Therefore, patience, flexibility and the ability to "follow" individual students constitute important skills of an instructor. In the course of computer skills training classes for seniors it is crucial for the teacher to concentrate on the quality of transfer and the skills and information acquisition rather than closely following the curriculum in a limited amount of time. It is necessary to be aware of and to accept the fact that during the workshops it might turn out that changing the curriculum is unavoidable (such a situation took place a few times during the course of the @ktywny Senior project).

Constructing a positive atmosphere full of kindness and the feeling of security in the course of the classes constitutes an integral element of the workshops. It is helpful to introduce humorous elements (especially when faced with problem situations or those that require imposing discipline). One must also remember to strengthen the seniors' motivation to learn and to boost their self-esteem as well as to appreciate the commitment of the individual participants of the workshops.

The first meeting is to a great extent decisive in successful education. Therefore, it should be aimed directly at establishing a positive, secure relationship between the instructor and the participants. The teacher's fundamental task is to introduce the seniors to a new situation in a "gentle" manner (for many people it is the first "meeting" with a computer) and to dispel the anxiety connected to both the using the computer and having to study in a group. The instructor should keep reassuring the participants of the course that they "are not going to break anything" and that "the pace of the classes will always be adjusted to the skills of the least proficient". It is worthwhile to devote some time to introducing oneself and getting to know everyone in the group. In the course of the first meeting the aims, the curriculum and the plan of the classes needs to be discussed and rules governing the workshops must be formulated (the participants are to be encouraged to propose some of their own).

The methods and forms of teaching

Yet another example of the so-called "good practice" that can be drawn from the discussed project is the instructors' selection of methods and forms of teaching. The way of introducing information must be adjusted to the age of the participants of the course and the specific character of computer skills training. It is necessary to emphasise that the generation of people of 60 years of age and more is a generation educated first and foremost on the basis of words (written and spoken)¹⁸⁾, and to take into account the fact that acquiring computer skills is closely connected to constant, individual, practical exercises (the rule is to learn in order to act, to use the knowledge¹⁹⁾).

¹⁷⁾ During some of the workshops the „revision” took up 2/3 of the class time.

¹⁸⁾ E. Skibińska, op.cit., p. 103.

¹⁹⁾ O. Czerniawska, op.cit. p. 161.

The three learning models – the aural, the visual, and the kinaesthetic ones²⁰⁾ – should be taken into account. In the course of the discussed project the methods typical of a lecture were combined with the practical ones. Furthermore, emphasis was put on organising the information and combining the theory with practice²¹⁾.

In each of the classes it was possible to distinguish the theoretical part and the exercises. Nevertheless, as was formerly emphasised, most of the class time was devoted to practice – improving the formerly acquired skills and revising the newly introduced information.

The theoretical part resembled a mini-lecture. The instructor was to discuss the particular subject in as clear a way as possible to allow everyone to understand. Attention was drawn to a detailed discussion of a particular subject and formulating the "nothing is obvious" rule. Furthermore, numerous comparisons were drawn to things, experiences and knowledge familiar to the seniors (e.g. "the desktop is like a table or a desk with various folders, files, and boxes placed on it"). What is more, it was made sure that "that which is said" is regularly illustrated on the board. The attractiveness of the lecture was enhanced by humorous elements, which served to lower the tension among the participants.

In the course of the theoretical introduction the teachers conducting the classes attempted to introduce only the most important information ("saving the information", refraining from going into details) in a way comprehensible to all the audience (short, simple sentences). It was also made sure that emphasis was put upon the practical benefits of each of the acquired skills.

The optimal adjusting of the computer-related jargon to the needs of the seniors turned out to be a major difficulty. On the one hand the instructors were aware of the fact that using technical terms is not advisable at this stage of training, on the other, introducing the participants to the basic computer-related terminology at the introductory stage of education is a crucial element of the course. In relation to this issue it was obligatory for the teachers to establish a list of terms and words that the seniors could have contact with every day (while practicing at home, while getting help, seeking advice at a computer shop, etc.) and to explain and use them during the classes.

In the course of the theoretical introduction emphasis was put on managing the groups' energy and imposing discipline. Making the seniors receptive of the information introduced by the instructor constituted an essential element

²⁰⁾ A successfully organised training must contain the part when the teacher:

- Tells the participants what they have to know so that they can hear it;
- Shows the participants what they have to learn so that they can see it;
- Allows the participants to try that which they have to learn so that they can be active.

Cf. M. Kida, R. Neczej- Świdzka, *Interaktywna metoda kształcenia dorosłych*, http://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul_v2.php?numer=21&id=472, retrieved: 10.07.2009.

²¹⁾ Cf. Por. Por. J. Golonka, op.cit., p. 299.

of the classes. The group were to listen actively and concentrate on what was being said and presented by the teacher²²⁾.

The exercises constituted an integral continuation of the theoretical introduction. The seniors fulfilled a number of tasks "step by step", first according to the guidelines provided by the instructor, and then individually. At this stage emphasis was put on the verbalisation of detailed instructions (e.g. in the lower right corner of the computer screen there is a clock. What time is it?). Furthermore, it was the aim of the teacher to constantly make sure that everyone understood the instructions and completed the exercise correctly. At this stage apart from a regular and careful observation of the members of the group it is important to ask comprehension questions related to the currently discussed subject (e.g. can everyone see what time it is?). It is crucial to encourage the participants of the course to let the teacher know of any problems they might have and to form the habit of addressing the questions directly to the teacher or a voluntary worker (and not to the "neighbour"). Hereby the value of the participation of voluntary workers in the course needs to be emphasised again; their help was truly priceless. Such a way of working with a group allows for a fast and at the same time effective evaluation of the quality of education.

While the participants complete the tasks the teacher must remember about the individualisation of the process of education. The instructor should (as formerly mentioned) be characterised by a flexible approach to the curriculum as well as the choice of teaching methods. It is essential that the pace of the classes be adjusted to the individual abilities and potential of each of the members of the group. That is why preparing various versions of the exercises – for those who work successfully as well as for those who need more time to acquire the particular skills – constitutes a crucial element of the classes.

It is also obligatory that the teacher sums up the entirety of the class and motivates the participants of the course to practice individually outside the class.

Teaching materials

The preparing of teaching materials by the instructors constituted an advantage of the *@ktywny Senior* project. Therefore, all the introduced information was additionally presented in the form of the so-called textbook that was distributed among the participants before the start of the classes. This allowed the seniors to supplement the materials prepared by the instructors according to their own needs which supported the teaching process greatly. The particular subjects were described, explained and presented „step by step”. They were prepared in such a way as to make it possible for all the participants of the course to do the exercises

²²⁾ All the subjects were numerously revised by the seniors, which allowed for providing further explanations, answering questions, and a repeated, individual explanation of the information.

individually at home with the use of the materials received in class. A selection of the materials is included in the supplement.

Conclusion

The above information constitutes a collection of experiences gained during the *@ktywiny Senior* project. Nevertheless, the choice of the analysed subjects allows one to notice that the structure of the text is clearly aimed at presenting the so-called "good practice" in the education of seniors. Although many of the issues require improvement the presented computer skills training workshops are a proposition of classes that may be followed as a successful example while preparing computer skills training for seniors.

It also needs to be emphasised that the presented text is yet another attempt at joining the discourse related to the education of people in late adulthood. Providing an answer to the question – how to teach seniors? – requires an ongoing exchange of thoughts and experience gained from conducting activities of numerous types.

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Advanced stage of the computer skills training course for seniors – introducing the participants to the world of the internet (guidelines for teachers)

Summary: Using the internet is the most important part of the course for many of its participants. There are many ways in which the teacher can use the curiosity and the enthusiasm of the seniors to introduce them to the world of the internet. However, the instructor bears a great responsibility, since the quality of that first serious major contact of the seniors with the global Web depends largely on him. The teacher must also point out the potential dangers of using the Web to the participants of the course and show them the ways to avoid the threats. The knowledge that the instructor is to share is not uncomplicated; there are, however, certain simple ways to spread it successfully. The teacher should bear in mind that using the internet may be a practical skill making one's everyday life easier as well as an adventure and a source of great satisfaction.

Key words: seniors, the third age, the internet, course, self-education, the global village, hypertext, email, websites, new technology, security on the Web.

For many of the participants of the computer skills training course using the internet is the stage that they have been waiting for since its beginning. The moment is accompanied by numerous positive emotions, such as curiosity; however, certain anxiety – natural when walking down an unknown path – may be sensed, as well. The positive attitude constitutes a great advantage to the teacher and an excellent basis for the classes. Nevertheless, before getting to the point and realising the subsequent stage of the course it is necessary for the instructor to organise his basics, as well.

One must understand just how important the changes of the commonly available technology that took place in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century are. M. McLuhan proposed that under the influence of modern technology our world shrinks to become a global village¹⁾. The author shows a connection between the rise of the new society and the spreading of non-specialised technology that – unlike the specialised technology – reconstructs tribal bonds²⁾. It also leads to the return of the values typical of the preliterate cultures and a rebirth of the worldview similar to the preliterate one³⁾. It is, therefore, a breakthrough which can compare with the invention of the printing machine and moving from the preliterate world to the literate world. Although M. McLuhan did not live to witness the beginnings of the internet, it is because of that medium that the global village described by him could actually come to life. The World Wide Web became a bridge between the literate world and the post-literate world.

Within the society relying on information technologies the individuals who cannot use the internet are often marginalised, in many ways – just like the illiterate in the societies relying on printed text. Apart from a lack of access to the advantages of the internet their common ground with the users of the Web is lost, and with it the chance for communication; they also remain outside one of the areas of public debate. Entering the virtual reality, becoming an internaut, has an enormous importance to the seniors. As J. Golonka states, it is not only the practical use of computers in the everyday (or professional) life of an individual, but it is mainly the issue of its lack of presence in awareness of that individual⁴⁾. The computer skills training course becomes, therefore, a senior's initiation into the world of information technologies. The character of initiation is to introduce permanent changes to the individual's awareness. In this case it does not allow one to enter the global village (since seniors – as all the other social groups – live there already) inasmuch

¹⁾ M. McLuhan, *Zrozumieć media*, J. M. Stokłosa (trans.) [in:] M. McLuhan, E. McLuhan, F. Zingorne (eds.), *Wybór tekstów*, Poznań 2001, p. 210–211.

²⁾ Tamże, s. 231.

³⁾ M. McLuhan, *Galaktyka Gutenberga*, J.M. Stokłosa (trans.) [in:] M. McLuhan, E. McLuhan, F. Zingorne (eds.), *op.cit.*, pp. 186–187.

⁴⁾ J. Golonka, *Kurs obsługi komputera jako forma inicjacji informatycznej seniora na przykładzie słuchaczy Uniwersytetu Trzeciego Wieku w Uniwersytecie Wrocławskim* [in:] L. Jakubowska-Malicka, A. Kobylarek, M. Pryszyk-Ciesielska (ed.), *Audiowizualność – Cyberprzestrzeń – Hipertekstualność. Nowoczesne konteksty edukacji*, Wrocław 2009, 291.

as it causes one to participate in its life in an active and purposeful way. In the case of entering the world of internet, the instructor bears a great responsibility, since the quality of the senior's first contact with the virtual world and – to use the metaphor again – the successfulness of the initiation depend largely on him.

During the classes introducing the participants of the course to the world of the internet it is necessary to provide well-prepared teaching materials. They have to contain the definitions of the basic terms connected with the internet. The teacher should make sure that the materials he prepares:

1. Lack mistakes (especially important in the case of teachers who are not computer specialists);
2. Are easy to understand for the participants (especially important in the case of teachers who are computer specialists).

The terms that need to be defined (for the teacher himself as well as for the participants) are:

- The internet,
- WWW (World Wide Web),
- internet browser,
- address of a website,
- a link,
- Web search engine,
- email,
- email address,
- login,
- password.

The teacher needs to find such definitions that he himself will understand. The internet may be helpful, of course, especially the information to be found on Wikipedia. Explaining the basic terms, contrary to what one may believe, is of crucial importance – experienced users of the internet do not usually realise just how different the terms used while discussing the using of the Web are from the everyday language. In the course of the first contact the virtual reality appears to be quite distinct from the real world. Many of these terms have only some remote synonyms in the non-virtual reality. It is clear in the case of the term "login", "password", and "email address".

The teacher who is also an experienced user of the internet must describe the specific character of the Internet in a way that is easily understandable to the participants of the course. Such features of the discussed medium as:

- hypertextuality,
 - decentralisation,
 - innovativeness
- need to be explained.

Understanding the differences between a text and a hypertext is fundamental while accessing websites. A reader cannot interfere with the structure of a regular

text. One receives it in the form prepared by the author and needs to accept it as it is. A regular text is (typically) intended for linear reading, whereas a hypertext is of a nonlinear character and may be read in numerous ways. A reader is granted much more freedom during the contact with a hypertext; yet, one must also act consciously and know what one wants to do and how to do it as well as, in the case of making a wrong step, how to go back and fix the mistake. At this stage it is essential to emphasise the differences between the active and the inactive elements of a website. Attention must also be drawn to the need to distinguish between interesting information (which may be developed due to the hypertextual character of websites) and useless information (e.g. advertisements) that should be ignored. Browsing a website can be compared to skimming through a book, looking through a warehouse or searching for information in an encyclopaedia. The greatest number of similarities is probably to be found in the last example. One can start reading an encyclopaedia at any entry whatsoever and move to further ones following the cross-references that one may freely choose. Magazines should also be mentioned at this point, because due to a large number of colourful images contained therein they resemble popular websites.

In turn, the decentralisation of the internet may be perceived by the participants as dangerous chaos and lawlessness. In relation to this issue the attention must be drawn to its advantages – the opportunities for free exchange of thought and freedom of speech (with all possible consequences). Many of the seniors could have had contact with the image of the internet as presented in newspapers or the news on TV. While its usefulness is certainly mentioned therein, the dark sides – internet porn, paedophile circles, piracy, computer viruses, hacking databases and bank accounts – are discussed much more often. One's attention is strongly attracted by such information and they serve to create the general image of the internet as a dangerous environment. A practice must be set out to speak openly of both the chances and the risks while at the same time emphasising that following a number of safety rules the may allow one to benefit from the chances and to avoid the risks. The teacher might have to face a participants' attitude of a specific character – some believe that the internet is an interesting invention, but it definitely "needs some order". One can often hear the opinions that establishing one international institution aimed at controlling the information appearing on the Web and censoring and punishing the adverse internet users if need be would be a great solution. Such idealistic (at least in theory) speculations should be immediately cut short and both the impossibility of assuming full control over the internet and the ambivalent moral character of such control should be emphasised. The attempts at censoring the internet that are made repeatedly all over the world and the negative reaction that they trigger may serve as examples. The point of doing so is not only to introduce the seniors to the other, better side of the issue but also to make them more receptive of the purely demagogical promises to impose order in the internet that some politicians make. Positive solutions to the problem may be discussed at this point – e.g. moderation of the comments on news websites and internet forum posts, the voluntary character of following the rules of netiquette by the internet users and

punishing criminals instead of reducing the freedom of the medium, which is not only the means of committing a crime, as in some cases, but constitutes common good, as well. One must bear in mind that pornography existed before the invention of the internet and theft and fraud usually take place outside the web. It must be mentioned that an internet user is to be responsible for his own actions exclusively – some websites simply should not be accessed, if one is willing to avoid content that one may find offensive and one must also remember to adhere to the safety rules. It should be mentioned to the participants of the course that the denouncing the so-called "piracy" on the web is a false consensus. The phenomenon is complex and controversial. The problem cannot be explained sufficiently in but a few sentences, yet everyone could be encouraged to look for information on the subject by themselves - with the use of the internet. Thanks to this the seniors may not only learn more of the ongoing discussion on the notion of copyrights on the Web but are also given a chance to form their own opinions on the subject. They might find the ideas of the free software movement or free culture appealing.

One of the undoubtedly positive results of the decentralisation of the internet is its innovativeness. For the internet users it implies the need to be prepared for constant changes. The seniors must become accustomed to the fact that their knowledge will be regularly supplemented with subsequent elements with the introduction of new ways of creating websites or the development of internet browsers. The new information or solutions do not make the formerly acquired skills useless, they only complement them. To prepare the seniors to face innovation the teacher should show them many diverse websites in order to illustrate the similarities in their structure in contrast with the differences in details. They should be prepared for the fact that the image of a website as well as the internet browser may change overnight. That is why the knowledge of what to look for and how constitutes one of the most important competences to be acquired during the course.

The internet should be presented to the participants of the course in a broad and fair way. The virtual world is not a utopia, but hardly is it a dystopia, either. The teacher must, therefore, introduce the participants of the course to the advantages as well as the disadvantages. It is necessary to discuss the risks, however, and it must be made sure that the possibilities of avoiding them and solving the problems, if need be, are mentioned as well. One should not instil fear of using the internet in the participants of the course; yet, they must also be taught to pay attention to the issues of safety on the web. Most of all, the students must be reminded of the necessity to act consciously – internet users need to be able to predict the result of the steps that they make. The participants of the course must be aware of the fact that one cannot click on everything that one finds interesting. Through practice, guidelines of the instructor and the unavoidable mistakes made during the first stage of using the internet they will learn to distinguish the actual content of a website from the irrelevant active advertisements. Even though while accessing popular Polish websites one may encounter advertisements that only slow down the work,

accessing more specialised websites may lead to encountering those that open in the full-screen mode as well as malware (e.g. diallers connected with pornographic websites or advanced spyware). One must be careful when accessing linked content, especially on unfamiliar websites. Because of similar reasons the participants of the course must be made aware of the problem of spam. It may also contain malware. That is why it is crucial that the characteristic features of spam are discussed, i.e. the unfamiliar or strange sender address, suspicious subjects of the email, foreign language content. It is necessary to warn the participants of the course against opening the attachments to emails of unknown origin. Making conscious steps on the Web is connected with learning to avoid the websites with content that one may find offensive. All websites with pornographic, extremist, and vulgar content should be included in this category. The ability to recognise such websites depends mostly on getting accustomed to using the Web; nevertheless, there are some guidelines that the participants of the course can be provided with, such as – to read the address of the website or its short description on the search list carefully before accessing it. Some words and expressions whose semantic field when typed in a web search engine becomes quite distinct from the everyday one. The expression "pussy" may serve as an example of a word that if typed in a web search engine does not necessarily result in finding image files or information related to pussy cats. The "risky words" category includes mostly expressions from the English language – *pet, bunny, dirty, red, pink, nasty, naughty*, etc. That does not mean that these words are forbidden when using web search engines; one must, however, be careful and pay close attention to the Web search results.

The last of the problems related to internet security issues is privacy. The participants of the course should be reminded that email or bank account passwords resemble keys to the house and they may never be shared with anyone; if need be, they can be told to the people that one trusts the most. The issue of publishing personal information on the web is quite complex. The participants of the course need to learn to differentiate between the situations when providing true personal information (e.g. when starting a bank or an online auction website account) and those when this not obligatory (e.g. the filling in the forms when starting a free email account). It is essential that the seniors are aware of the need to be extra careful when posting information related to their private lives on internet forums, in chat rooms or social networking services. The participants of the course need to be aware that the information that they publish may be used against them, e.g. in money fraud attempts. It is necessary to mention that in these cases the security measures are quite similar to those in everyday life. One should not be too outspoken about their personal lives details when having a conversation in a crowded public place (and the social networking services can be compared to such a location). Attempts at fraud or extortion are common especially in real life - one may recall the "na wnuczka" ("the grandson") method⁵).

⁵ Criminals pretending to be friends of seniors' grandchildren in need of a money loan (translator's note).

The factor that is of crucial importance to the successfulness of the learning process is the participants' positive attitude towards the skills that they are acquiring. To encourage motivation to discover the Web the information should be provided that thanks to the internet one is able to:

- access websites,
- send files,
- use email,
- join internet forums,
- use instant messengers (e.g. Gadu-Gadu, Skype),
- listen to the radio on the net,
- shop online,
- participate in online auctions,
- play browser games,
- use online banking.

One must also remember the risks connected with using the internet:

- computer viruses,
- spam,
- pornography,
- explicit language,
- extremist content,
- fraud.

It must be emphasised, however, that when following some basic security rules and using the information available on the Web in a conscious way the risks can be avoided and explicit content is a price that has to be paid for the opportunity to benefit from the use of so universal a medium. The teacher should be prepared to provide more detailed information on the subject of the advantages and the disadvantages of using the internet. It is necessary to devote a little time to answering the questions of the participants of the course at the moment they are raised, rather than ignore them or cut them short, while at the same time making it clear that most of these issues are to be discussed further in the course.

According to L. Tuross, adult education is a process that presents a greater number of difficulties than education of younger people – modifying, unlearning, elimination of old opinions and habits is always more problematic than shaping new ones, for it requires the rejection of stereotypes in thinking and acting⁶⁾. In the case of internet skills training we do not usually have to deal with bad habits connected with using internet browsers or email. However, we might encounter some stereotypes impeding the acquisition process – to overcome these we must calmly provide comprehensive explanations.

Having discussed the basic theoretical problems we can move on to running and using internet browsers. The teacher should make sure that the necessary

⁶⁾ L. Tuross, *Andragogika. Zarys teorii oświaty i wychowania dorosłych*, Warszawa 1975, p. 26.

applications are installed on all the computers and to make himself familiar with the browser that is to be used in class. The seniors participating in the course are curious about the information that is being taught and they always ask many questions, so it is best to be prepared to explain why a particular internet browser is used (a results of recent surveys of the popularity of internet browsers may be useful) or what the specific components of a domain name are. It is necessary to be prepared for a quick discussion of the problems and controversies related to copyrights connected with sharing files on the Web. The questions are often raised while using freeware and the instructor has to explain in what ways it is different from commercial software. It is good to mention the beerware-type licenses to show the participants that the virtual reality is not as disconnected from the "real" world as it may seem and one might encounter some fairly sophisticated humour therein.

At the very first stage of using the internet the attention must be drawn to precise copying of Web addresses. It is worthwhile to teach the shortcuts available when browsing the Web and present the browser history and bookmarks to the participants. I also believe that it is better to choose the more difficult way to teach the participants of the course to use the browser bookmarks at the beginning and to teach them to work in many windows simultaneously, which might initially lead to confusion, but makes further tasks easier. The choice of a browser is up to the instructor, of course; it is best, however, to choose one of the more functional ones of those that are popular in Poland. One must also bear in mind that functionality means something different to a beginner and to a proficient internet user. The option of being able to work with numerous bookmarks at once is initially hard to understand and it is a skill that is hard to acquire, which will only be useful in the future. The option to enlarge the image, in turn, is enormously important and practical for seniors. Internet browsers with integral Web search engine windows should be avoided. For people who will have the first chance ever to enter a Web address and who do not yet know how to search for information on the internet such an option might constitute too advanced a convenience.

Developing awareness of actions and their consequences is an essential element of internet skills training for seniors. The participants of the course need to be made conscious of the fact that they actively browse the internet (with the support of an instructor, of course) and what happens on the computer screen depends on them. It is crucial, therefore, to demonstrate the connections between certain actions and certain results. The way of thinking in which the participants of the course are detached from the consequences of their actions and the events observed on the computer screen are perceived as independent from the particular users needs to be unlearned. Perceiving the virtual reality as part of the "something happened" category must be unlearned to move on to the "I did something" category. The participants of the course should never say or think "the window disappeared", "something popped up", "I was rejected"; instead, these need to turn into "I closed/minimised a window", "I opened a another website in a new window", "I followed

a link in a new window, the previous window with the previous website is still open and I can return to it”, “I logged out of my email account”.

Teaching the participants of the course to start their own email accounts is an important task; it is also time-consuming. First and foremost, the instructor needs to provide a clear explanation of what exactly a “login” and a “password” are. It is necessary for the teacher to make sure that all the participants put down the login and the password that they have chosen. Emphasis must be put on the fact that all the details of the login and the password – upper and lower case letters, spaces, punctuation marks – are relevant. It is important to make sure that the participants understand which of the logins and passwords were accepted by the system and that the correct login and password are put down on a piece of paper. The teacher must bear in mind that most probably some of the participants will not be able to start an email account on a particular server, regardless of the reasons. The fact that during the following class it might turn out that some of the people have forgotten the login or the password and it will be necessary to start a new account must be taken into consideration.

Having learned to send regular emails it is worthwhile that the participants of the course are taught to send e-cards. It is not a very difficult task and it will certainly allow the students to get accustomed to sending email and to learn to enter correct email addresses and to closely observe what is going on the computer screen. It all makes it easier to move on to the further, much more advanced task – sending and receiving emails with attachments. In this case it is necessary to go over the procedure a few times and take time to practice. It is important that the participants of the course are sure of what they want to send and where it is exactly before beginning the task. Before the start of the procedure it is worthwhile to do a revision of the basic information related to saving files and finding them in particular folders. (At this point it might turn out that a detailed revision is necessary.) The basic rules of using an email account – such as deleting spam, not opening suspicious messages or emptying trash – must be taught and practiced from the very beginning.

Introducing the methods of making an effective use of various web search engines while accessing information on the Web to the participants of the course is essential. It is a part of the course that participants have a very positive attitude about. The seniors particularly enjoy searching for image files. It is best not to hurry at this point to give everyone time to test the various search options feely. This is a good moment to check the practical skills of using the “click to go back” and “click to go forward” options and working in a number of windows and bookmarks at the same time. Of course, finding a particular piece of information (e.g. train schedule, a recipe or a location) is an exercise of crucial importance. It is best to start the exercise with putting that which is to be found and how to “translate” it into an expression to be typed in the Web search engine down on a piece of paper. Some of the participants of the course have a tendency to type entire sentences in the Web search engine, so restricting to expressions consisting of a few words only needs to be practiced.

Having introduced the participants to these basic subjects and skills it is necessary for the teacher to devote some time to addressing any doubts that may arise as well as correcting the mistakes that are made repeatedly. This constitutes a reliable basis for moving on to the final stage of learning – self-education. The teacher must remember about the moment of the end of the course and be aware of the fact that the participants will finally be able to independently undertake further tasks in the virtual world. The instructor is to help to overcome barriers and to acquire elementary competences. One must take into consideration what self-education is; J. Pólturzycki proposes that it is a process of learning, conducted with awareness of the opportunity to receive various forms of help from individuals and institutions. It is a process of independent learning, with the aims, content, forms, sources and methods chosen and established by the learner⁷⁾. In the case of using the internet the institution that may provide help for the participants of the course is the internet itself. That is why it is essential that they are able to find and use the information that they need.

In the course of the work with the seniors during the computer skills training course the teacher meets people at various education levels and diverse life experiences. Among the participants of the course one may find those who have spent all their lives managing the household as well as those who have been professionally active for a long time. Some have finished their organised education at an early stage; some, however, may turn out to be retired lecturers or scientists. Therefore, when the teacher refers to the participants' experiences when explaining the introduced information he should not look for a common ground. Using a number of diverse metaphors and analogies to allow the participants of the course to choose the ones that they find the most meaningful is a much better method.

The use of metaphor is particularly profitable when having to address the doubt that is common among the participants – „are the competences that we are acquiring really practical?”. It is required of the teacher to make sure that nothing of what was learned goes to waste. Elementary skills remain just as useful regardless of which internet browser we use or on which server our email accounts are located. The metaphor of a kitchen or a bathroom is helpful here; these rooms are quite distinct in each particular household, yet in every one of them similar elements can be found, and they allow one to prepare dinner or have a shower.

While addressing the advanced issues connected with using the internet during the computer skills training course the senior voluntary workers – experienced computer users – provided great help in conducting the classes⁸⁾. At this stage the individual differences in how fast one is able to acquire information and the deficiencies in the formerly learned skills become clearly manifest. In such cases

⁷⁾ J. Pólturzycki, *Wdrażanie do samokształcenia*, Warszawa 1983, p. 14.

⁸⁾ Senior voluntary workers took part in the computer skills training classes organised as part of the @ktywny Senior project.

the voluntary workers can support an individual student in overcoming difficulties, which is extremely helpful from the perspective of working with the whole group.

At the end of the present article I would like to share a conclusion that might at first seem fairly obvious; it is, however, of great importance – the teacher must first and foremost be flexible, not only during the advanced stage of the course. The curriculum ought to be subject to ongoing revision and adjustment to the progress made by individual participants. There is no point in introducing new subjects if the information is not discussed in detail, understood and acquired. It is better to slow down and do less than we have originally intended than to implement the curriculum without anyone actually learning anything.

Entering the new, unknown world of the Web presents a challenge for the participants of the course as well as for the teachers. It is a task that both sides have to face, with commitment and mutual trust in the competences of both the students and the instructors mandatory. Success in this sphere will not be achieved easily – arduous work and having to face numerous difficulties that have to be solved with combined effort are to be expected. The effort, however, will certainly be fruitful and become a source of great satisfaction of the beginner internet users as well as the instructors-guides. Using the internet is not just another skill making everyday life easier – it also can become an enjoyable adventure. It is worthwhile to suggest this thought to the participants of the course.

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dr Ewa Jurczyk-Romanowska, mgr Joanna Golonka, mgr Jacek Gulanowski

Computer and internet skills training for seniors^{*)}

Form of classes: workshops

Number of classes: 30 (45 min. each)

Curriculum developed by: Joanna Golonka, Jacek Gulanowski, Ewa Jurczyk-Romanowska

AIMS OF THE CLASSES:

- Teaching elementary and intermediate practical computer skills.
- Broadening the knowledge related to the possible uses of computers in everyday life.
- Overcoming the anxiety and individual barriers connected with using computers.
- Teaching the user-computer communication and mutual interaction.
- Teaching internet use skills.
- Encouraging curiosity.
- Equalling the seniors' educational chances and promoting active living among them.

The proposed subjects of the classes ¹⁾ :	
1	<input type="checkbox"/> History of computers <input type="checkbox"/> Structure of computers <input type="checkbox"/> Rules of working with computers (turning the computer on/off)
2	<input type="checkbox"/> Rules of working with computers: using the mouse <input type="checkbox"/> the basics of working with computers: desktop properties, icons, discussion of the terms: cursor, taskbar
3	<input type="checkbox"/> Creating folders and subfolders <input type="checkbox"/> Putting text files in proper folders
4	<input type="checkbox"/> The basics of using the Microsoft Word <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Discussion of the application window● Using the keyboard● Typing
5	<input type="checkbox"/> Text editing <ul style="list-style-type: none">● bold font,● <i>italics,</i>● <u>underlining</u>
6	<input type="checkbox"/> Saving the files on the hard drive and external hard drives and flash drives <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Option: "Save"● Option: "Save as"

*) A selection of fragments of the first, beginner level computer skills training course book developed by the members of the Stowarzyszenie AVEC (AVEC association).

¹⁾ Attention! The curriculum may be subject to change during the course. The content introduced will be constantly adjusted to the needs and the pace of work of each of the groups of the workshops.

7	<input type="checkbox"/> Text editing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing fonts and font sizes • Text alignment (left, right, centred, justified)
8	<input type="checkbox"/> Text editing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing font colour • Highlighting • Line spacing • Bullet characters
9	<input type="checkbox"/> Text editing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inserting pictures • Formatting pictures • Inserting symbols
10	<input type="checkbox"/> Text editing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copying data • Moving files and folders • Simultaneous work in a number of applications
11	<input type="checkbox"/> Inserting tables <input type="checkbox"/> Typing in tables <input type="checkbox"/> Using help
12	<input type="checkbox"/> Table editing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Column size adjustment • Row size adjustment • Inserting columns • Inserting rows
13	<input type="checkbox"/> Text editing with the use of formerly introduced options
14	<input type="checkbox"/> Printing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing documents to be printed • Configuring the printout
15	<input type="checkbox"/> Introduction to internet use <input type="checkbox"/> Rules of using an internet browser <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data searching
16	<input type="checkbox"/> Using the potential of websites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussing popular websites
17	<input type="checkbox"/> Rules of using an internet browser <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data searching
18	<input type="checkbox"/> Rules of using an internet browser <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching for image files
19	<input type="checkbox"/> Using email <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • starting an email account (Gmail) • logging in • discussion of the email account window
20	<input type="checkbox"/> Using email <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing, sending and receiving emails • forwarding emails • deleting emails <input type="checkbox"/> What is spam?
21	<input type="checkbox"/> Managing emails <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachments <input type="checkbox"/> Removing an email account <input type="checkbox"/> Using Gmail help
22	<input type="checkbox"/> Managing contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating contacts • Editing contacts • Deleting contacts • Searching for contacts
23	<input type="checkbox"/> Managing contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating contact groups • Adding contacts to groups • Sending emails with the use of the formerly introduced options

24	<input type="checkbox"/> Using the potential of online banking
25	<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities created by the internet: sending e-cards with wishes, listening to music, watching films, etc.
26	<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities created by the internet: using databases (PKP, PKS, MZK, tourism, medicine)
27	<input type="checkbox"/> Rules of using instant messengers: Gadu Gadu, Skype
28	<input type="checkbox"/> Rules of using internet forums
29	<input type="checkbox"/> Rules of shopping on the Web (internet auctions – Allegro)
30	<input type="checkbox"/> Using the internet with the help of the formerly discussed applications

Lesson Plan 1

The problems:

- ❖ History of computers
- ❖ Structure of computers
- ❖ Guidelines for buying a computer
- ❖ Rules of working with computers (turning the computer on/off)

HISTORY AND STRUCTURE OF COMPUTERS



Fig. 1. ENIAC. The first multi-purpose fully electronic computer designed for calculations, based on vacuum tubes

Source: <http://www.plantsciences.ucdavis.edu/amr21/AMR21newsite/AMR21/NewEALpages/Lect03.html>

Interesting facts:

ENIAC, the world's first calculating machine was constructed in 1946 at the University of Pennsylvania. The computer was constructed on the basis of tube technology (1,400 tubes), **designed in 1943 and functioning until 1955.** On the basis of this computer the constructors of ENIAC created the first mass-produced computer UNIVAC (5,600 tubes). The invention of the transistor in 1948 was a breakthrough that triggered a rapid development of electronic devices.

The creation of ENIAC was partly accidental. Dr Herman Heine Goldstein employed at the Ballistic Research Laboratory while looking for a solution to the problems of ballistic charts during the control at the University of Pennsylvania met John Mauchly (PHD) and John Presper Eckert (electronics engineer). They joined an army specialist training course. In their leisure time they worked on a project of an electronic calculating machine. Goldstein immediately became interested and after a few days both the men became members of the BRL. The Army did not think long before deciding to grant them the necessary funds. On June 5, 1943 the secret project PX was launched. The project eventually cost 486,000 USD. The computer was given to the army in 1947. (...) ENIAC consisted of 42 300×60×30 boxes set up in a 12×6 m U shape. It used 18,800 vacuum tubes, 6,000 commutators, 1,500 transmitters, and 50,000 resistors. It weigh „merely” 30 tons and used up 140 kW in an hour. Two Chrysler engines with the combined power of 24 KM were used for ventilation. Each box was fitted with a humidifier. A thermostat was also used to stop the device when the temperature reached 48C. Communication with the computer was maintained with the use of punched cards. The ENIAC operated in the decimal numeral system and the adding of 5,000 such numbers took one second.

The classification and everyday use of computers

- ❖ **Personal computers** – with the size allowing to place them on a desk, usually used by one person



Fig. 2. Personal computers

Source: <http://www.elektroda.pl/rtvforum/topic2065794.html>; http://www.allbestwallpapers.com/laptop_wallpapers.html

- ❖ **Mainframe computers** – often large, designed for processing large amounts of data for the use of various institutions, often work as servers, etc.



Fig. 3. Mainframe computers

Source: <http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Ibm704.gif>.

- ❖ **Supercomputers** – The biggest computers of high calculating power, used for time-consuming calculations and simulations of complex systems.



Fig. 4. One of computer cabinets

Source: http://pl.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Plik:BlueGeneL_cabinet.jpg&filetimestamp=20061122012519

- ❖ **Embedded computers** – highly specialised computers used to control machines as in **industrial automatic control and consumer electronics** (e.g. **mobile phones**, etc.).

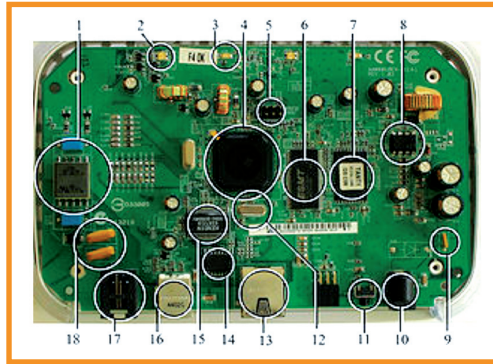


Fig. 5. Embedded computer

Source: http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Komputer_wbudowany.

Computer structure (the basics)

Computer – main part of the personal computer hardware; contains the most important elements of the computer enclosed in a computer case. Depending on the structure of a particular type of the computer it contains: power supply unit,

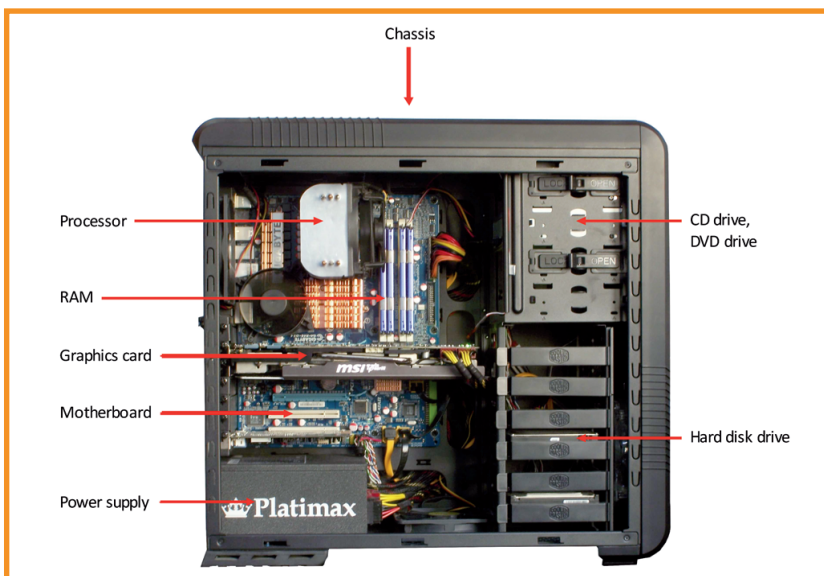


Fig. 6. Structure of a computer

Source: <http://imageshack.us/photo/my-images/207/obudowa2222.jpg/>.

motherboard with the processor, the RAM module, and ports used for connecting with peripheral devices; such components as the hard drive, expansion cards, etc.

Screen – one of the *output devices* used for direct communication between *the computer* and its user. The aim of the screen is to immediately visualise the results of the work of the computer.

Input/output devices – used for communication between the *computer* and the user, another computer or other devices.

There are output devices, input devices as well as input and output devices.

- **input devices:** *keyboard, computer mouse, scanner, joystick, and disc drives;*
- **output devices:** *screen, printer, speakers, headphones;*
- **input/output devices:** *network card, modem, touch screen, hard drive, Bluetooth, USB, all other drives.*

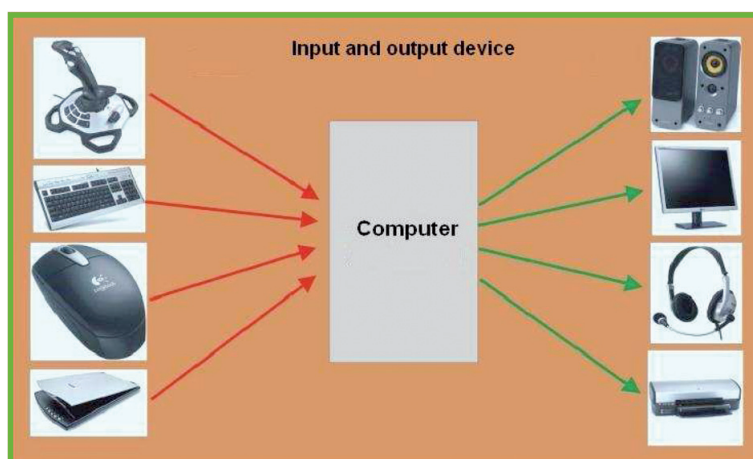


Fig. 7. Input and output devices of a computer

Source: http://www.nysa.edu.pl/sp10/informatyka/urzadzenia_wyjs_wej/grafika.jpg.

Motherboard – the main *circuit board* of an *electronic* device used for housing the most important components of the device, allowing for communication between all the other components and modules.

Primary hard disk drive – the component of a computer used for storing data. The programmes constituting the functionality of a computer are installed on the primary hard disk drive, i.e. the operating system and application software.

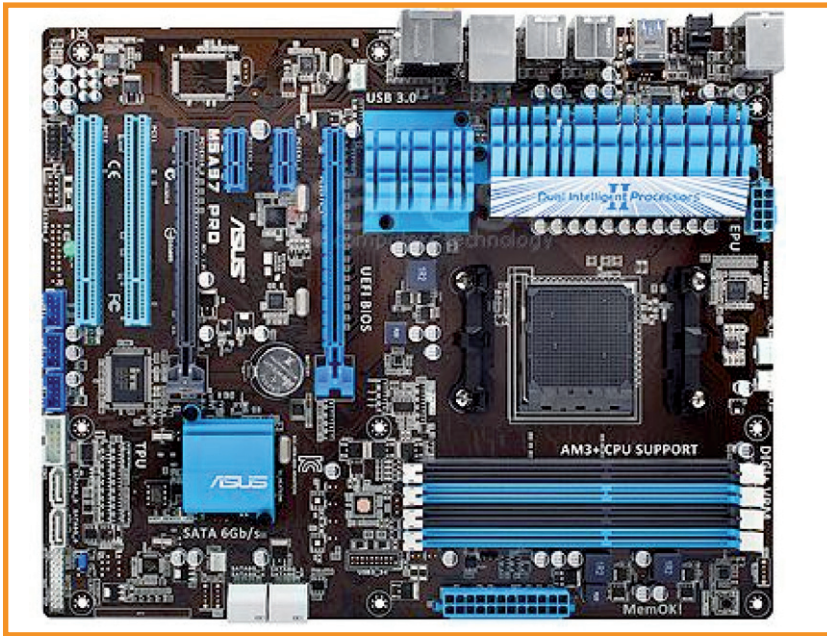


Fig. 8. Motherboard

Source: <http://www.arest.pl/zdjecia/25369/ASUS-M5A97-PRO-ATX-AMD-970-4x-DDR3-2x-PCI-E-16x-RAID-S-AM3/1>



Fig. 9. A 3,5" hard disk drive used in PCs (left) and a 2,5" one used in laptops (right)

Źródło: <http://www.komputerswiat.pl/poradniki/poradnik-kupujacego/sprzet/dyski-twarde/2009/04/poradnik-kupujacego-dyski-twarde.aspx>

Processor, also CPU – Central Processing Unit – an integrated circuit; executes the instructions of the programmes. It manages and synchronises the work of all the computer components.

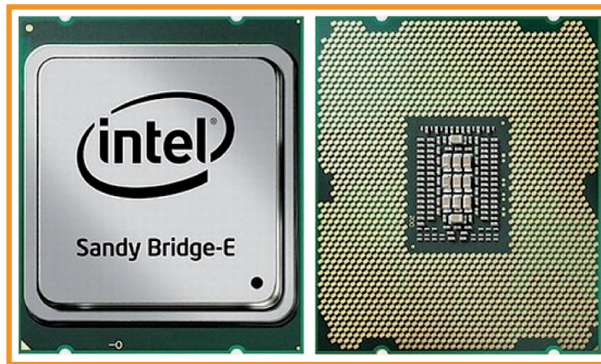


Fig. 10. Processor

Source: <http://chydzinskitemasz.wordpress.com/2011/11/16/ile-warte-sa-nowe-procesory-intel-core-i7-extreme-desktop/>.

Graphics card – an expansion card responsible for the images displayed on the screen. The graphics cards vary in their speed, RAM size, image resolution, the available colours and frame frequency.



Fig. 11. GeForce GTX 560 Ti graphics card

Source: <http://tech.wp.pl/kat,1009779,title,Nowe-karty-graficzne-Palit-GeForce-GTX-560-TI,wid,13082423,wiadomosc.html?ticaid=1e653>.

Sound card – a computer expansion card used for recording, editing and playing sounds. The commonly used term music card is also correct.

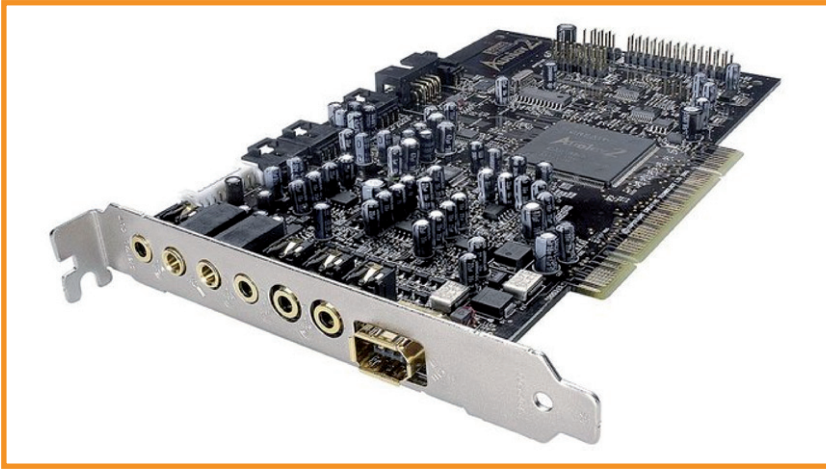


Fig. 12. A sound card

Source: http://m.onet.pl/_m/080deddc04abbf6718de3eea160eb367,29,38.jpg.

RAM – Random Access Memory – the basic type of digital memory; the RAM loads the currently used data so that they are immediately available for the processor. Much faster than mass data storage devices such as the hard disk drive or CD drives. Unlike these types of drives the data stored in RAM is lost after turning the computer off – so to work the RAM needs constant power supply. The RAM consists of integrated circuits embedded in plastic boards called memory modules.

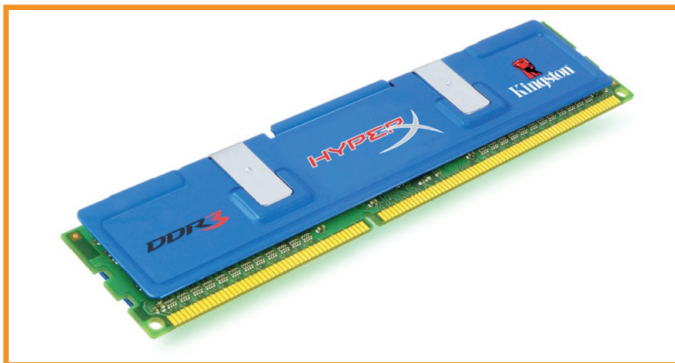


Fig. 13. A DDR3 memory module

Source: http://www.jcusbflashdrive.com/KINGSTON-HyperX-DDR3-1375MHz--1600MHz--1625MHz--1800MHz-and-2000MHz-Memory-RAM_p672.html.

HUMOUR:

A mathematician, a chemist, a mechanic, and a computer specialist were about to travel in a car together. But the car wouldn't start. They tried to decide what to do.

– Maybe we should check if the wheels are all in place? – the mathematician suggested.

– Must be something with the fuel, we should get rid of it and tank up again – the chemist proposed.

– No way... Must be the engine – the mechanic said.

And the computer specialist said:

– Why don't we get out and get in again?

Guidelines for buying a computer: What To Buy And How

I. The various ways of getting a computer

1. The advisable way – **buying a computer from a small company** that provides assembly, setting up and repair services. In this case the choice of components and devices is up to a specialist (what information to give – cf. point II).
2. Buying an **assembled computer** in a computer shop.
3. **Assembling a computer** on our own – the most difficult and risky way.

II. What to pay attention to when buying a computer

1. Choosing between a PC and a laptop/notebook
 - a) **PC** – **better** performance at a similar price (it is faster), it is possible to develop it.
 - b) **Laptop** (notebook, portable computer) – **worse** performance at a similar price; it has a number of **advantages**: no need of assembly (it is all in one piece), light, so it can be used anywhere and it is easy to take e.g. to a service shop, takes up little space.
2. **Parameters** of a computer (what to tell the specialist who will be assembling the computer for us)
 - a) The computer is intended for **home and office use** (unless we are planning to use it for the newest games or for advanced images/films/music editing – in such case a good graphics and/or sound card is necessary).
 - b) Operating system – certainly **Windows XP** (it was used during the course).
 - c) It is best to choose a **large screen**, e.g. 19", so that the images are clear.
 - d) It is good to ask for a **possibly large and fast hard disk** drive and large RAM.
 - e) the most important parameter is **the price that we are willing to pay** for the computer (e.g. 1,800, 2,000, 2,500 PLN) – it lets the specialist choose the best parameters within the price range.

TURNING THE COMPUTER ON

1 Step


Press the **large button at the front of the computer case**

The button with the  symbol ("circle and line") or the one labelled "Power"

- Green light

2 Step

Press the **large button at the front of the computer screen**

The button with the  symbol ("circle and line") or the one labelled "Power"

- Green light

Having done this wait patiently for the system to boot.

Then the computer is ready to be used.

IMPORTANT!

In the computer lab to turn on the computer you need to type in the user name and password (they are on the sticker on the computer case).

TURNING THE COMPUTER OFF

1 Step


To turn the computer off safely

- Close all application windows (so that you can see the desktop on the screen)
- Find the sign „Start” **in the lower left corner of the screen** → Move the cursor there (so that the sign is highlighted) → Press the left mouse button → A scroll down list appears. At the bottom of the list find the "Close" sign. Move the cursor there (highlighting) and click the left mouse button → A "Turning the computer off" sign appears – Move the cursor to the "OK" sign and press the left mouse button. Once the button is pressed the operating system initiates the shutdown procedure (about 1 minute).

2 Step

Turning the computer screen off

Press the large button at the front of the computer screen

The button with the  symbol ("circle and line") or the one labelled "Power"

- The green light is turned off

Lesson plan 4

The problems:

- ❖ The basics of using the Microsoft Word
 - Discussion of the application window
 - Using the keyboard
 - Typing

Microsoft Word is a word processor developed by Microsoft, currently the most popular application of this type in the world.



Starting the Word word processor¹⁰⁾:


- Find the sign "Start" in the **lower left corner of the screen** → Move the cursor there (so that the sign is highlighted) → Press the left mouse button → A scroll down list appears.
- Find the "**Programmes**" sign, move the cursor there (highlighting) → another scroll down list appears.
- Find the "**Microsoft Office**" sign, move the cursor there (the cursor must be moved in a straight horizontal line, in the direction that the arrow points to, so that the scroll down list does not disappear) → highlighting, another list appears.
- Find the "**Microsoft Office Word**" sign, move the cursor there (highlighting) and press the left mouse button.

The Word application window appears (the fig. below).

TYPING (Polish alphabet practice): **text used during Ogólnopolskie Dyktando Ortograficzne** **(The Polish national dictation)**

Jak rozhasana hałastra harcerzy chimerycznie zmitrężyła czas

Z okazji Dnia Ziemi na ziemi olsztyńskiej grupka krnąbrnych harcerzy pletwonurków z Gdyni Chyloni miała wyłowić z rzeki Krutyni górę śmieci. Po dwuipółdniowej włóczędze czarnooki, ryżawy dowódca znużonej drużyny zażądał od hożej druhenki z Pułtusa uwarzenia naprędce co najmniej superpożywnej zupy

¹⁰⁾ If you can see the  icon on your desktop it is enough to move the cursor there and click the left mouse button twice. The application will start (you will see a white „piece of paper“).

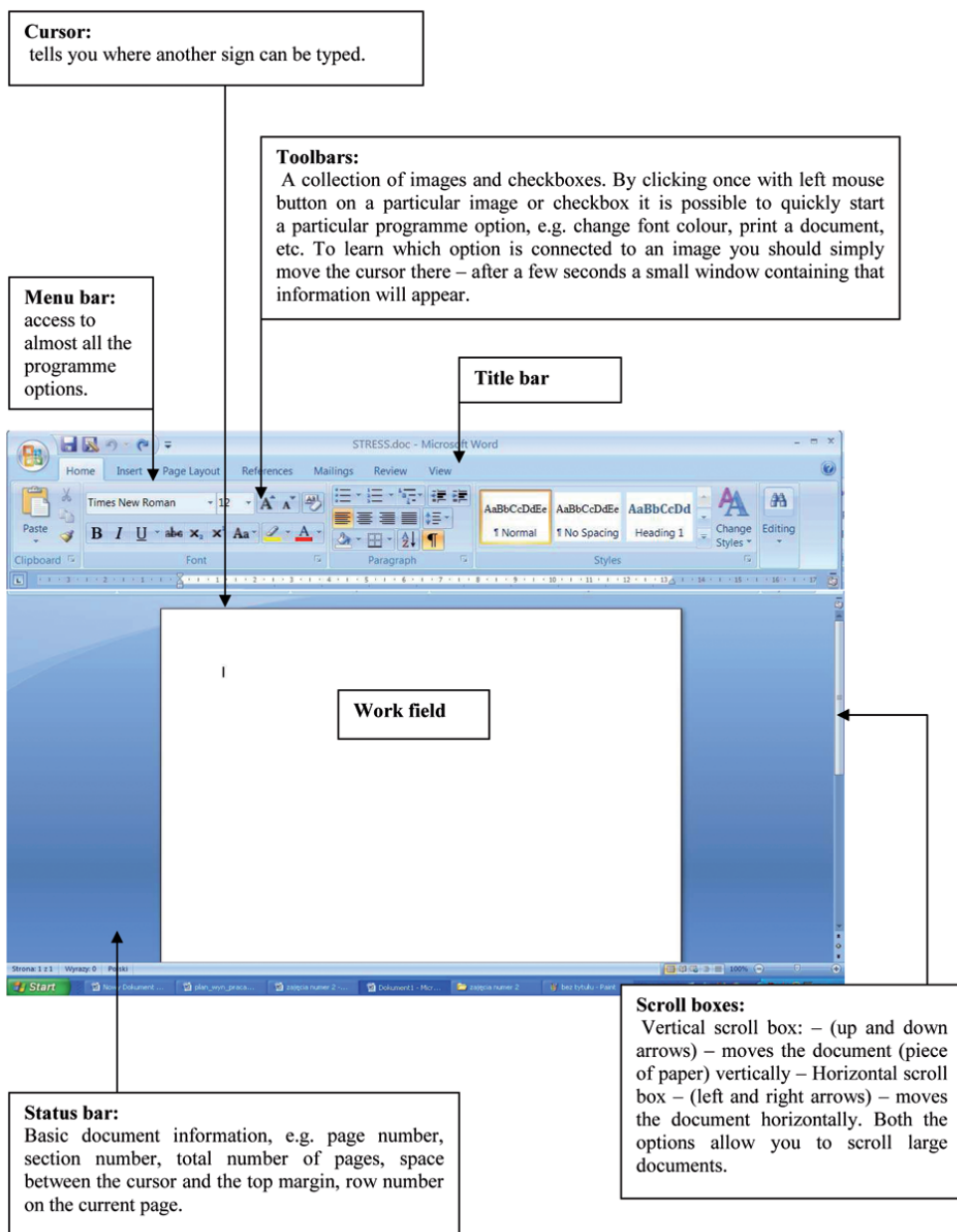


Fig. 15. The Word window (the basics)

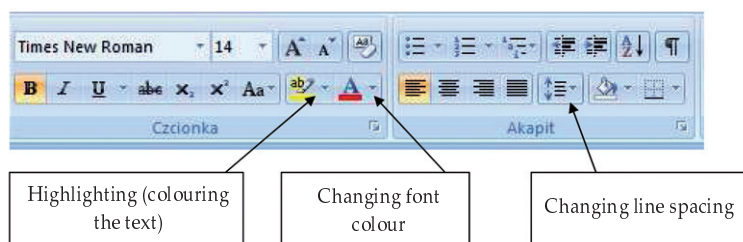
jarzynowej tudzież przyrządzenia wysokokalorycznej sałatki z jeżyn, bakłażanów i rzeżuchy. Gdy niesforna młódź porządnie sobie podjadła, nie zwlekając, ruszyła chyżo naprzód. Jednakże na rubieżach powiatu ostródzkiego chwacki przywódca zuchów – skądinąd zagorzały obieżyświat, nie lada ścichapek – ni stąd, ni zowąd

zamarzył o nicnierobieniu. Zamiast od razu zmierzać do celu, z nagle zarządził przerwę w marszrucie i rozpoczął swe wagabundzkie bajdurzenia. Toteż nasi bohaterowie w pośrodku mało znaczącego przysiółka, pogrążeni w słodkim nieróbstwie, pół siedząc, pół leżąc wkóło ledwo żarzącego się chrustu, wprost chłonęli niby-myśliwską gawędę swego arcykomendanta o nie najblahszej przygodzie z żubrem, jaka mu się przydarzyła niedaleko Białowieży.

Lesson Plan 8

The problems:

- ❖ Text editing:
 - Changing font colour
 - Highlighting
 - Line spacing



Highlighting/Changing font colour:

2 STEPS:

1. Mark the text
 2. Choose the programme option
- } Class 4

Exercise:

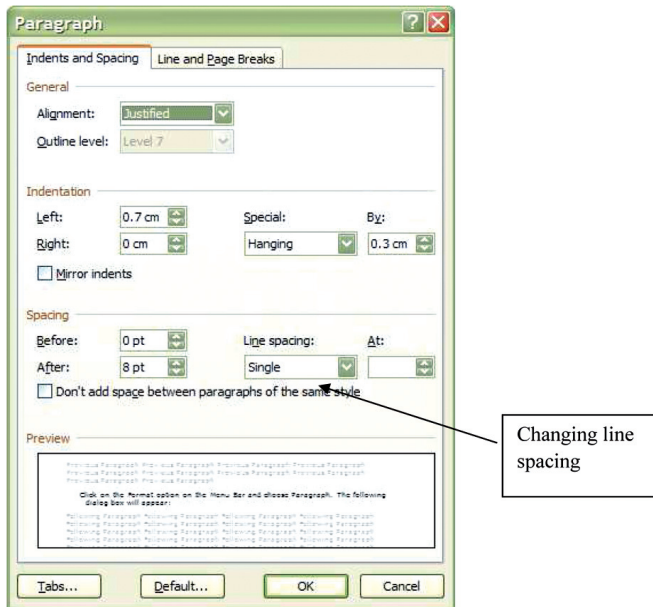
ŻABA

Warzy **żaba** smar, *pelen smaru gar*,
 z wnętrza **gara** bucha para, **z pieca bucha żar**,
 smar jest w garze,
gar na żarze,
 wrze na **żarze** smar.

Changing line spacing:

1. Mark the text
 2. Choose a programme option
- } Class 4

3. A table appears:



Source: Mouse Training Company: Word 2007 Introduction, <http://www.moustetraining.co.uk>.

4. Click the "arrow" next to the window marked above → a scroll down list of the line spacing options appears.
5. Choose one option and click OK once with the left mouse button.

Exercise:

Pada ciepły deszczyk, } set the spacing to 1,5
 Miłe grzeje słońko, }
 Ale jeszcze nocą } set the spacing to double
 Zimno jest jabłonkom }

Lesson plan 22

The problems:

- ❖ Using email
 - writing, sending and receiving emails
 - forwarding emails
 - deleting emails

*What is spam?***1. Receiving emails**

2. Sending emails

- 1) Choose the "new email" option
- 2) Fill in the Recipient field (type the email address)
- 3) Type the email content
- 4) Type the email title
- 5) Send

One email can be sent to a number of recipients. To do this – add the addresses separated with commas to the Recipient field.

3. Forwarding emails

You can forward the received email to another recipient. To do this – choose the Forward option and then type the email address of the new recipient.

The forwarded message will have a changed title – before the main title the Fw: or Fwd: symbol will be placed.

4. Spam

Spam (from Spiced Ham – a type of canned ham that constituted the basis of the US Army food supply during WWII) – unwanted or unneeded emails, usually advertisements.

Spam usually contains advertisements sent by various companies, but some of it is sent by frauds.

Spam not only clutters the email account, it may also contain viruses or malware.

Most email accounts have spam filters, but these are sometimes insufficient.

Spam should be deleted without opening.

Spam may at first resemble emails from your contacts.

You should look carefully at an email before opening: check if you know the sender, if the title is suspicious, if the size is larger than 0 kb.

You should not respond to spam

You should be careful publishing your email address on the Web.

HUMOUR:

Spam – the only gift you can be sure to get for Christmas.

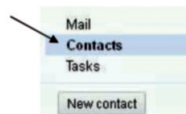
Lesson plan 24

The problems:

- ❖ Managing contacts
 - Creating contacts
 - Editing contacts
 - Deleting contacts
 - Searching for contacts

Creating contacts:

1. Click the **Contacts** option in the top left part of the email account window
2. Click the **new Contact** button in the top left corner



3. Type the contact details in correct fields on the right side of the window
4. Click **Save** to add the contact

Email addresses are added to the Contacts list every time the function **Answer**, **Answer to all** or **Forward** is used for sending an email to an address that is not on the list.

Editing contacts:

1. Click the **Contacts** option in the top left part of the email account window
2. **Choose a contact** on the contacts list
3. Click **Edit** at the top of the page
4. Edit
5. Click **Save** at the top of the page

Deleting contacts:

1. Click the **Contacts** option in the top left part of the email account window
2. **Choose a contact** on the contacts list (user name) (middle column)
3. Click **Delete Contact** at the top of the page (the trash bin icon)
4. Click **OK**

Searching for contacts:

1. Click the **Contacts** option in the top left part of the email account window
2. Type the name/surname/address/user name of the contact that you want to find in the search field



Creating contact groups:

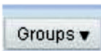
To keep your email account in order you should put your contacts in groups of your choosing, e.g. family, friends, co-workers, participants of the computer skills training course, students, doctors, etc.

1. Click the **Contacts** option in the top left part of the email account window
2. Click the **New Group** button in the top left corner



3. A window with: How do you want to name your group? Will appear
4. Type **the name** and click **OK**

Adding contacts to groups:

1. Choose a **contact** or a number of contacts (click once)
2. Click the **Groups** option 
3. A scroll down list will appear
4. Choose the group that you want to add the contact(s) to

Sending email with the use of the Contacts option:

1. Click the **Contacts** option in the top left part of the email account window
2. **Choose a contact** by clicking the user name (middle column): a "tick" will appear (you can choose more than one contact)
3. Click the **Email** option in the window on the right

IMPORTANT: If you only choose one contact click the email address that appears in a window to the right of the user name.

Sending emails to groups:

1. Click the **Contacts** option in the top left part of the email account window
2. Choose the group that you want to send the email to (click the name)
3. The names of all the group members will appear in the middle column
4. Click the **All** option at the bottom of the contacts list or choose particular people that you want to send the email to
5. Click the **email** option in the window on the right

HUMOUR:

In a computer shop a shop assistant touts his newest product:

- This computer will do half the work for you!
- Good, I'll take two.

Lesson plan 27

The problems:

- ❖ Rules of using instant messengers
 - Downloading Gadu-Gadu
 - Installing Gadu-Gadu

GADU-GADU

To start a new account in the Gadu Gadu instant messenger to do the following:

INSTALLING GG

1. Go to www.gadu-gadu.pl. Download the newest version of the instant messenger



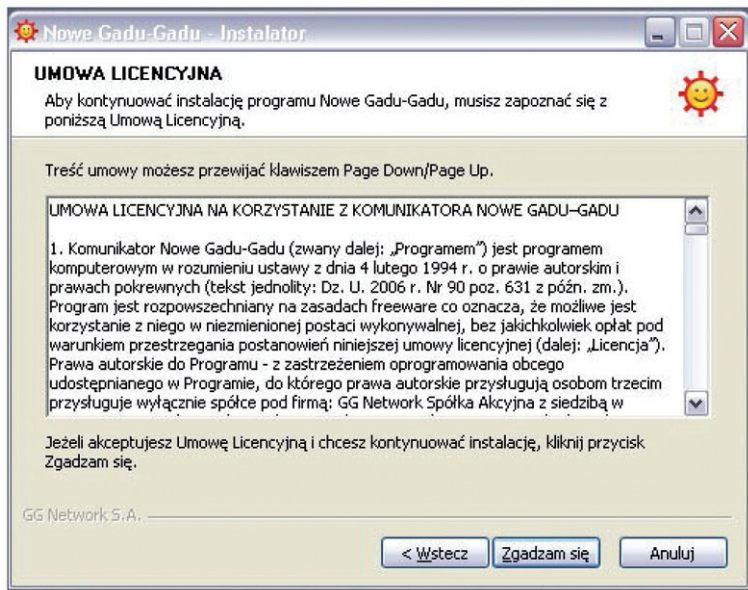
2. Install to programme on the hard drive



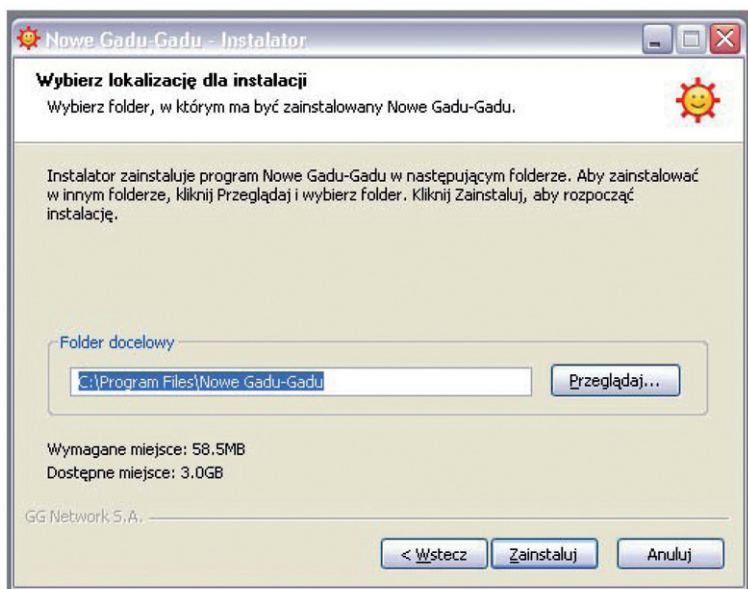
3. Installation wizard window will appear – read the instructions and follow them carefully. To go the next stage click "Next"



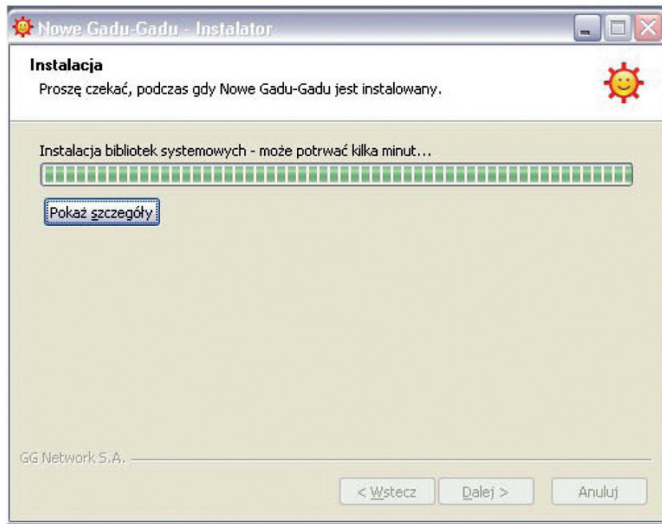
4. In the "License agreement" click "I agree".



5. Choose the installation directory in the GG installation wizard. It is usually installed on disk C and that is why the wizard proposes the option automatically. If you agree – click "Install".



- The Gadu-Gadu programme is being installed – it may take a while, so you should wait and watch the green progress bar (the more complex the programme the longer the installation).



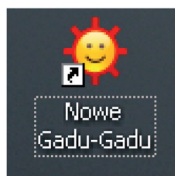
- The wizard finishes the installation – “The Gadu-Gadu installation wizard has finished” – click “Finish”.



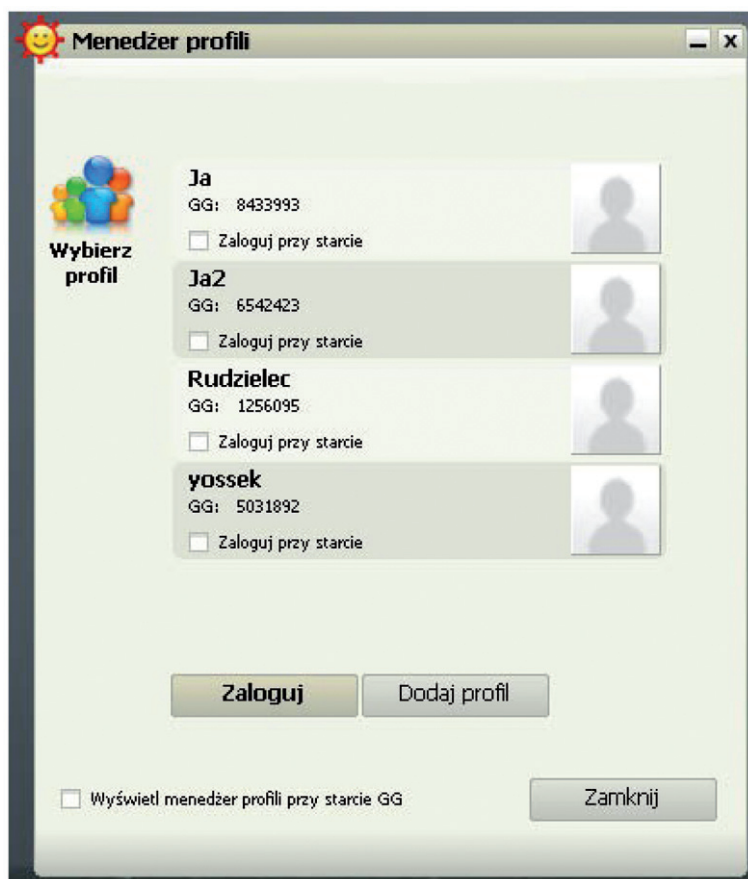
IMPORTANT! The installation process of most computer programmes is similar. You just have to follow the instructions carefully. Good luck!

STARTING GADU-GADU FOR THE FIRST TIME

1. When installation is finished a new icon is to be found on your computer desktop – click it twice to start Gadu-Gadu:

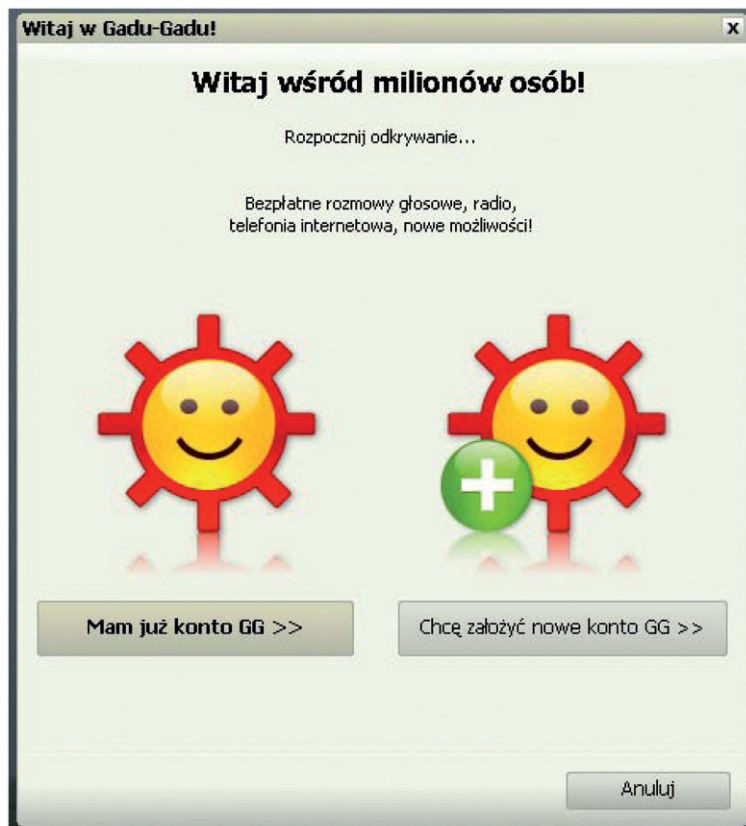


2. Profile manager will appear – click "Add profile".



3. A new window appears in which two options to choose from depending on whether we already have a Gadu Gadu account or not are presented. If you need to **start an account** (or you have completely forgotten your number) click

the "I want to start a new GG account" – a new GG number will be chosen for you (it is necessary to remember it, just like in the case of your phone number). If you **already have a GG account** and you are only installing a new version of the programme (or you are installing a new operating system, or you have a new computer, or you want to log in from someone else's computer, etc.) click "I already have a GG account" – you will be asked to type your GG number.



4. To register a new GG account you need to fill in the form below. The fields marked with (*) are obligatory to be given a GG number. After filling in the form the wizard will ask you for more information, which is facultative – the information will work like that given in a phone book, so it will allow people to find you GG number to get in touch with you.

Kreator nowego profilu

Utwórz profil dla nowego numeru GG

Dla osób korzystających z proxy - [kliknij tutaj aby skonfigurować serwer proxy](#)

 **Twoje konto GG**

*Nazwa profilu:

*Hasło GG:

Siła hasła:

*Powtórz hasło GG:

Zapisz hasło

*E-mail:

*Przepisz kod:  

*Pole obowiązkowe

Anuluj Wstecz Rejestruj

5. When the registration is finished an information about the GG number and (sometimes) the password appears. PUT DOWN THIS INFORMATION – IT IS NECESSARY TO USE GADU-GADU!

Ukryj hasło'. There is a 'Zaloguj się!' button and an 'OK' button at the bottom."/>

Kreator nowego profilu

Gratulujemy!

Twoje nowe konto GG zostało zarejestrowane! Oto dane GG:

Numer GG: 15577738

Hasło GG: **qwerty11** [Ukryj hasło](#)

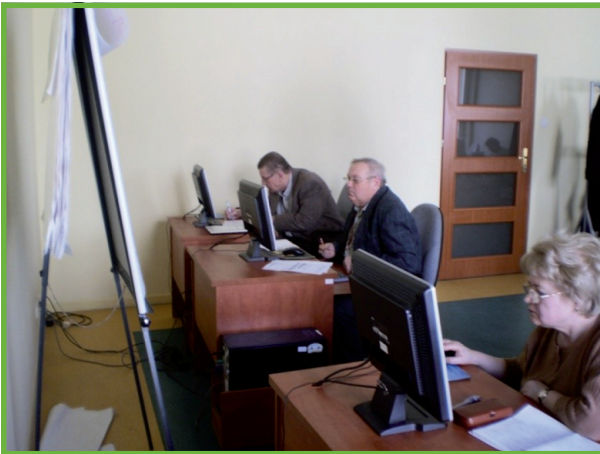
Zaloguj się!

OK

Computer skills training for seniors – photos



Computer skills training workshops



Computer skills training for seniors – photos



Computer skills training workshops





PART III
Health education of seniors

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In his free time he goes sailing and does taekwondo.

Ailments of old age

Summary: The presented article is a brief overview of senior age-specific ailments targeted at readers with no medical background. The author has attempted to select the problems most commonly diagnosed in older people. By making this text accessible to the average reader through the lack of use of medical jargon, the author has attempted to provide simple methods of avoiding illnesses, reducing the risk thereof and alleviating their symptoms, which are within reach for everyone.

Key words: illnesses, old age, seniors, prevention.

It is often said that “illnesses don’t read books”. It is of course only part of the truth and a significant simplification, because the human organism is, contrary to popular belief, definitely an imperfect machine, prone to malfunction, having no warranty card nor user’s manual. Therefore, the same illness may look totally different with different people, despite following the same “model” provided in literature. It is a known fact that the character of every illness depends on the period of life

in which they are encountered. For instance, heart attack is usually lethal for a 30-year-old, while for a 60-year-old diabetic it may cause so little pain that it may be unnoticed and the patient will continue living a seemingly healthy life. Another example is that of an intercranial hematoma. For the aforementioned 30-year-old its course is often severe, its clinical picture clear and with a negative prognosis, requiring instant treatment, when every minute counts, and the neurosurgeon's dexterity of utmost importance and pivotal for the patient's survival. Whereas the 60-year-old with the same condition comes to the neurological practice because of continual dizziness and headache which are unpleasant but do not impede everyday activities. The diagnosis is made after a week following a computer tomography or MRI head scan and the patient may be operated in urgent mode¹⁾ – with no risk to their health. Also, there exist some illnesses which are specific to a given age: multiple sclerosis, which begins between 20 and 30 years of age, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, which becomes evident only after the age of 40. The aim of this article is to present basic information on the health problems of seniors (the assumed age being 60 and older²⁾) The author does not intend to write another academic textbook, which would contain typical specialist medical knowledge, but to provide an overview of the most common health issues in the Polish senior population.

Cardiovascular illnesses

Atherosclerosis is the most widespread vascular illness, concerning both systemic and coronary circulation. People tend to believe that it stems solely from and unhealthy lifestyle. Despite it being known to intensify the condition, it has to be understood that atherosclerosis is a process which begins practically at the moment of birth. Changing one's lifestyle at the age of 40 cannot „fix” the body – it can only lead to the risk of heart attack, stroke or Leriche syndrome reaching the average level for the population at the age of 60. The Polish are generally convinced that e.g. an hour of swimming every week is a waste of time and that the traditional „bigos” (sour cabbage and meat stew) or „schabowy” (breaded pork chop) with potatoes constitute the healthiest diet. Polish people generally eat a lot, with a lot of fat, few vegetables, often in a hurry, which has to be considered harmful. Together with lack of physical exercise it leads to serious consequences: bypass surgery³⁾ or

¹⁾ Many people confuse acute mode with urgent and scheduled mode. Scheduled mode is used in situations when the patient's illness is non-threatening, i.e. varicose veins. Therefore admission to hospital even at a year's notice does not pose any medical risk. Urgent mode is used in situations when postponing therapy may significantly worsen the patient's state, but immediate treatment is not required. It is usually a matter of several days. Urgent mode constitutes the situation when postponing therapy poses high risk regarding the patient's health and life. It is usually related to injuries or severe internistic and oncologic cases.

²⁾ According to the WHO definition senior age is divided into three stages: 60–75 years of age – old age, 75–90 – elderly age, more than 90 – longevity.

³⁾ CABG-cardio-aorticby-passgraft.

lower extremity amputations because of severe atherosclerosis in the case of people who would be described from the medical point of view as simply mature. Genetic factors are obviously significant, but are beyond our reach in the current state of medical art. What we can do, following the example of better developed countries, is promote the habit of everyday physical exercise, at least an hour long, as well as healthy diet – with more vegetables and less fat. When designing one's diet, it is advised not to follow popular solutions praised in the media. For example, a diet constituting of meat alone may lead to weight loss – but also to acidosis and may result in heart failure or a stroke. If diet change is needed, one should trust a nutritionist as a person educated in this field. „Eating hygiene”, i.e. avoiding eating in a hurry, in a standing position or at night, is also an important factor.

Cardiovascular illness symptoms may be diverse. The most widely recognized is chest pain. However, it does not necessarily mean there has been a heart attack – it can also be caused by autonomous nervous system⁴⁾, conditions or intercostal neuralgia⁵⁾. Still, severe chest pain, especially if radiating towards the mandible or left upper extremity requires urgent cardiological diagnostics to rule out the possibility of a life-threatening state.

The issue is similar for the lower extremities. The author has observed numerous cases of patients consulted at the vascular surgery practice when atherosclerosis was suspected, but ultimately neurologists diagnosed spinal arthrosis or herniated nucleus pulposus at the given spine level⁶⁾.

Metabolic disorders and endocrine system illnesses

Diabetes is still the most common metabolic disorder. A description of its causes and mechanisms, of which there are many, would much exceed this volume. The illness is often diagnosed by chance during routine check-ups, or when facing its complications such as diabetic foot, kidney conditions, and ultimately diabetic coma⁷⁾. The patient's self-control is fundamental for successful treatment – regular glycemia⁸⁾, checking, medication intake and keeping the prescribed diet. Diet therapy is also fundamental for many other illnesses, including gout, inflammation of the pancreas, as well as the young age-specific lysosomal storage disease⁹⁾. It is

⁴⁾ Autonomous nervous system – part of the nervous system responsible for „governing” the functioning of internal organs.

⁵⁾ Intercostal neuralgia – pain in the nerve area, below one of the ribs. It may be the result of an injury to the nerve or inflammatory factors, e.g. Varicella Zoster Virus infection, which is responsible for chickenpox and shingles.

⁶⁾ A common symptom of this condition is severe, treatment-resistant sciatica.

⁷⁾ Diabetic foot, diabetic nephropathy, diabetic retinopathy, diabetic coma – diabetes complications resulting from lack of treatment or patient-specific low reaction to therapy.

⁸⁾ Glycemia – blood glucose level.

⁹⁾ Lysosomal storage disease – illnesses resulting from disorders in the metabolism of certain substances, usually congenital, with clinical symptoms visible during childhood.

important to remember that neither pharmacotherapy, nor adequate diet can lead to full recovery from atherosclerosis, but they facilitate staying healthy and leading an active life.

Thyroid conditions constitute a serious and broad problem. There exist both hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism (thyroid swelling caused by increased or decreased hormone production) and one may transform into the other. Also, it is similar to inflammation as well as cancer attacking this organ. Diagnostics is often problematic and other illnesses may cover the basic problem. As long as it is not cancer, operating is not required, unless it is needed in cases of large retrosternal goiters which impede breathing and may cause sleep apnea. Obesity is also often erroneously linked with thyroid conditions, while in fact there is often no connection and they act as a mere excuse from changing eating habits.

Respiratory system illnesses

Lung neoplasm (cancer, if it is malignant) is the most widely known lung condition. There are many popular misconceptions connected with it. It is worth remembering that currently neoplasms constitute a group of chronic illnesses, with patients able to live for a long time in a generally good state, thanks to the new options in therapy. What is more, there exist respiratory illnesses with much more severe and swifter consequences. COPD¹⁰⁾, diagnosed mainly in smoking addicts, seems to be the most serious of these. It is a result of chronic bronchitis and emphysema and leads to the need of constant oxygen therapy, frequent hospitalization and ultimately the need to use a respirator as breathing aid, even for people in their early 40s. That is why when attempting to prevent respiratory illnesses what matters most is to break the nicotine habit, because apart from the widely known mechanisms responsible for lung cancer, it is also directly linked to inducing inflammatory reactions in COPD, asthma, as well as infectious respiratory system diseases. It is important to take care to maintain a good general condition of the respiratory system, mainly through sports. This allows to reduce the risk and symptoms of all the illnesses mentioned above.

Abdominal organs illnesses

This is a wide group of illnesses and the most common is peptic ulcer disease. Its features include seasonality (a rise in symptoms during spring and autumn), strong pain especially in the epigastrium. In the past, surgery used to be considered a form of treatment: section of the vagus nerve branch responsible for gastric acid secretion or removal of part of the stomach with remodelling of the remaining part. Currently, treatment is focused on improving eating habits, diagnostic and therapeutic endoscopy and pharmacotherapy, which gives much better results, especially thanks

¹⁰⁾ Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.

to the advances in endoscopic technology. Surgery is now generally performed only in cases of ulcer complications, i.e. perforated ulcers¹¹⁾, or the need for resection¹²⁾ of possibly cancer-developing fragments.

Gallstones is a condition which is commonly treated surgically, by performing gallbladder removal. On the one hand, it is an illness which can be successfully controlled by adequate diet, but on the other hand, continued inflammation of the gallbladder may lead to cancer development. That is why, in the context of recent research, it is now preferred to remove the gallbladder in every case of the illness – including cases of gallbladder inflammation with no gallstones, as well as minor even gallstones with no symptoms. It is often performed by laparoscopy¹³⁾, which is minimally invasive, with only three small incisions. The operation is not riskier than standard surgery, which would require opening the abdominal cavity.

Appendicitis should be considered the most common surgical condition of the abdominal cavity. At the same time it is the most difficult to diagnose digestive system illness, hence the proverb: "nobody has made their career on the appendix, but many have ended it there". The typical textbook description of appendicitis refers to laboratory test results, pain in the epigastrium radiating within several hours to the right hypogastrium, nausea – usually with no vomiting, a slight fever, raised pulse. Despite the rather thorough description in literature, the author admits to having dealt with only one case where most of the criteria listed above were met. Therefore, patients coming to surgical reception, despite suspected appendicitis, are often being admitted to the surgical ward for observation, or diagnostic laparotomy¹⁴⁾. Diagnosing appendicitis is complicated because many other conditions may mimic this illness; these include pneumonia, inflammation of female reproductive organs or intestinal ischemia caused by mesenteric artery blockage¹⁵⁾ or a condition as rare as porphyria¹⁶⁾. Appendicitis is dangerous because of its complications, i.e. distributed inflammation of the peritoneum, which still happens to be lethal. Despite the stereotype that appendectomy is a simple procedure, not a real surgical operation, the risk related to surgery remains the same as with other operations which include opening the abdominal cavity and the intestine.

¹¹⁾ Perforated ulcer in the stomach or duodenum – fracture of locally transformed stomach or duodenum wall with leakage of digestive juices into the abdominal cavity causing a life-threatening inflammation.

¹²⁾ Resection – removal of part of the organ.

¹³⁾ Laparoscopy – an operation which consists of inserting two tools and a video camera into the abdominal cavity, using three small tools. This currently allows to perform many types of surgery which used to require leaving large surgical scars and other, much more significant complications.

¹⁴⁾ Opening the abdominal cavity for the purpose of thorough diagnostics. Unfortunately, in some cases it is the only effective diagnostic method.

¹⁵⁾ Blood vessel responsible for supplying blood to most of the intestines.

¹⁶⁾ Porphyrias – a group of illnesses related to invalid metabolism of heme, a component of hemoglobin.

When talking about abdominal illnesses one cannot forget about vascular conditions. The most important of these are intestinal ischemia (which leads to bowel necrosis and obstruction as well as inflammation of the perineum) and aneurysm of the aorta – the main blood vessel of the human body. Aortic aneurysms are dealt with in urgent mode because a burst aneurysm which is not dealt with within several hours leads to death caused by blood loss. Its symptoms are again non-specific and may consist only of distributed abdominal pain. Diagnostics is possible only through imaging – USG and computer tomography. Surgical treatment involves considerable risk¹⁷⁾, however, it is the only effective method that gives a chance of survival.

Acute and chronic pancreatitis constitute another major group of illnesses. In the case of this article it is enough to remind that this is a highly lethal condition and even after having suffered from it already, it is advised to keep a strict diet and avoid alcohol.

Urinary system illnesses

Kidney stones, which are mainly caused by genetic predisposition, are definitely the most common urinary system illness. Their occurrence is often accompanied by severe pain. Untreated they may lead to kidney obstruction and ultimately atrophy. Surgical treatment is currently rarely undertaken – thanks to advances in non-invasive techniques it is possible to destroy kidney stones virtually painlessly. It is, however, important to note that the condition may recur despite accurate treatment.

Severe complications include kidney inflammation (nephritis). Nephropathy¹⁸⁾ (including its post-inflammatory case) constitute a large group of conditions which, unfortunately, often lead to kidney atrophy and failure as a result. The only option for therapy is dialysis or kidney transplant. Poland differs from Western countries in the fact that these transplants are still rare here, despite major information campaigns in the media. Technically, there even exists the option of transplants within the family, which are the safest form for the patient, and if certain conditions are met – virtually harmless for the donor, because the human organism requires only 25% of healthy liver core to function.

Another group of illnesses consists of cancer conditions of the urinary system. As in many other cases, both lifestyle and environmental factors play an important role here. People commonly believe that smoking causes only lung cancer, while it also promotes oral cavity and larynx cancer and in fact the most common cancer for smokers is bladder cancer...

Most media attention is still targeted at prostate cancer. However, it is to be noted that most men over 50 years of age suffer from enlargement of the prostate. This automatically leads to a higher level of markers (substances found in

¹⁷⁾ According to some authors the risk level in ruptured aortal neurysms reaches 50% of cases.

¹⁸⁾ Nephropathy – illness of the kidney as a whole.

patient's blood) considered typical for this cancer. That is why men aged 50 and more, regardless of urination or sexual function problems, should have their urinal system examined – so as to exclude the possibility of malignant tumours.

Central nervous system illnesses

This is another broad group of conditions which include functional and degenerative disorders, as well as vascular and neoplastic diseases. Understandably, the one feared the most is central nervous system cancer. However, they are considered rare and meningiomas – described by Harvey Cushing in 1936 – are the most common, but are usually mild and nonrecurring, given of course that complete tumour resection is possible. Meningiomas are interesting in the context of this article because they usually occur in patients aged over 50. They can often grow for as long as 20 years and symptoms become evident only after the tumor has become massive. This means that they are often diagnosed simply by chance, e.g. during computer tomography in the case of head injuries. Unfortunately, other types of central nervous system cancer lead to more serious consequences and therapy brings much worse results. For instance, average survival period for glioblastoma multiforme is still as little as 52 weeks.

Vascular central nervous system illnesses constitute a major group. They most notably include aneurysms and arteriovenous malformations¹⁹⁾, but also strokes. The former two can be diagnosed before they are fully apparent, while when it comes to strokes we are virtually helpless. The current state of medical knowledge, despite recent general advancement, does not allow to predict strokes nor to prevent them apart from general hygiene rules. The progress and outcome of these illnesses is also quite random - for some patients a discreet asymmetry of facial muscles is the only symptom of having had a stroke while for others it may result in severe disability even if the stroke was caused by the same artery closure.

Aneurysms and arteriovenous malformations are very versatile and are sometimes mild with the first symptom being only the strongest headache ever experienced and neck stiffness. In such a case the prognosis is positive and after aneurysm occlusion (usually intravenous²⁰⁾) the patient recovers fully. Unfortunately, this mainly depends on the localization: a subarachnoid hemorrhage may well result in death or severe disability despite therapy and rehabilitation.

Degenerative illnesses of the central nervous system: Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, which lead to progressive dementia, constitute another significant group of conditions. Alzheimer's disease therapy is currently a matter of testing new

¹⁹⁾ Artery to vein connection disorders, which bring the risk of intercranial hemorrhages, often life-threatening.

²⁰⁾ Intravenous therapy – operations consisting of puncturing the vessel, then inserting a catheter which includes the tools needed for occluding the aneurysm. Therapy is not constricted to brain vessels – coronoplasty, i.e. widening the vessels which supply the heart, is done similarly.

medications, while it has been possible to control Parkinson's for nearly 60 years. In the 1950s surgical Parkinson's disease therapy was introduced and it consisted of implanting special electrodes in certain regions of the brain. Despite initially positive results, this method was discontinued for nearly 20 years, since the arrival of a new therapeutic option – the L-DOPA. It is generally still used in treatment, however, since it did not live up to the expectations, surgical treatment has been reintroduced. Combination therapy, in which both a surgery is done and dopamine is supplemented, currently seems to be the most effective form of therapy. It allows to keep the therapeutic effect of L-DOPA for a longer period of time and still use smaller doses, and therefore avoid adverse drug reactions.

Degenerative spine disease is another common problem, especially for obese people, who rarely engage in any sports. It usually takes the form of degenerative disc disease. Depending on which curve is affected, the symptoms may include as follows: in the cervical region – headaches and vertigo, paresthesia in the upper extremities or even difficulty in handling objects; in the lumbar region the most common symptom is pain radiating along the back surface of the thigh, even as far as the foot. In the most serious cases it may lead to foot drop and a decline in muscle strength. Treatment depends on the severity of the illness – surgery is considered the last resort in the case when rehabilitation and anti-inflammatory drugs do not bring the expected effects and the pain impedes the patient's daily life.

Mental disorders

A common Polish misconception is that having visited a psychiatrist is something to be ashamed of and perhaps even harmful. It is important to note here that in fact the psychiatrist's duty is to help their patients. It is especially the case since many states are found to be a symptom of underlying depression, and not actually organic diseases as they were expected. These include chronic fatigue, different kinds of pain, and also a lot of different conditions which seem to be organic diseases at first.

Addiction therapy is still a significant problem. The psychiatric definition of addiction differs greatly from the one commonly known in society. In short, it is not related to the amount or frequency of intake of a certain psychoactive substance, but it rather refers to the effect on professional and private and family life of the patient. Despite the existence of numerous models, there are no exact directives – every case has to be assessed individually by the psychiatrist.

Conclusion

Readers should concentrate first and foremost on the health factors which they can influence directly. In other words, it is difficult to predict who might have a brain aneurysm which poses an immediate risk of rupture, but it is much easier to state that an overweight person will much more probably have a heart attack than someone who does sport every day, keeps a sensible diet and follows their doctor's

instructions. It is also worth noting that sport does not only mean weightlifting or Eastern martial arts, but also one hour of jogging per day, swimming or even walking in the park, for older people. And success comes mostly from constant self-improvement, which can be observed e.g. in the practices mentioned above.

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Medical tests as one of the activities in the innovative @ktywony Senior project

Summary: This article presents the results of preventive medical tests performed in the @ktywony Senior project, which resulted in informing the patients that their health and fitness depends mainly on themselves. General problems of illness prevention are discussed and a description of the performed tests is given. The article is a description and conclusion of the realization of the medical component of the @aktywony Senior project and it was conducted in the Niepubliczny Zakład Opieki Zdrowotnej "Zawidawie" healthcare facility in the Wejherowska medical centre in Wrocław.

Key words: preventive medicine, medical tests, seniors.

Introduction

The medical tests done in the *@ktywny Senior* project, whose aim was to increase the mobility, social, physical and professional activity of older people (above 60 years of age) and development of local initiatives for broadly understood social integration as well as opposing civilizational exclusion of old people¹⁾, were performed in March and February 2008.

The article is a description and conclusion of realizing the medical component of the *@ktywny Senior* project which was conducted in the Niepubliczny Zakład Opieki Zdrowotnej "Zawidawie" healthcare facility in the Wejherowska medical centre, located in Wrocław (ul. Wejherowska 28, building no. 4). Making the idea which originated from the NOVA-MED association a reality was possible thanks to the understanding and support of the Aktywne Centrum Zdrowia (Active Centre of Health, which owns NZOZ "Zawidawie") board.

The administrative staff of healthcare facilities are aware of the significance of preventive medicine in society, but the situation related to performing of any actual activity is generally bad. This mainly refers to adults, and even more to older people, for whom any projects are hardly ever realized, as if preventive medicine had no significance for that group! Actually it ought to be just the other way around – chronic illness prevention ought to be broadly understood especially in relation to adults and seniors.

Medicine is mainly occupied with biological reactions to illnesses and their genetic and environmental reasons. In the current healthcare model there is "neither the time, nor the means" for preventive medicine for seniors. The most significant fact is that healthcare cannot carry the weight of those activities because their outcome does not depend on it. A patient's state, both when they are healthy and when they are chronically ill, is influenced mainly by factors of the following nature: environmental (events in life, psychologically supporting stimuli), sociological, cultural (customs, ideas and values), cognitive (the character of perception, assessment, meaning) as well as behaviour (the ability or inability to cope). Every action aimed at amplifying the factors which improve those functions or skill can be considered preventive.

Health promotion and psychoprophylaxis should be realized e.g. by community leaders (elected from their local communities). The general practitioner (family doctor) plays a major role in the preliminary stage. The doctor notices the first symptoms of inability (in the psychological sense) in their patients and he or she can identify these people who need encouragement to take up activities which may allow the patients themselves to find a support group. Doctors who have earned their

¹⁾ Ferenc M., Z założeń projektu *@ktywny Senior*, unpublished.

patients' trust can pass on information and encourage them to perform such activities or – which I believe is the most effective – participate in tests similar to those which we conducted in the @ktywny Senior project. Collaboration with various local self-government institutions, foundations, universities and associations is a means to show patients the way to an active and joyful life.

Description of tests performed in NZOZ "Zawidawie" in Wejherowska medical centre in Wrocław

Before commencing the workshops everyone who volunteered in the program (they had received individual invitations by mail) took part in screening tests and filled out question forms – declarations of participation in the program. The tests consisted of checking the cholesterol and glucose level in capillary blood. Everyone with an incorrect result was directed to their doctor for further diagnostics and treatment. The test was performed by an experienced team consisting of one nurse and one laboratory technician. It was performed according to a detailed plan prepared by one of the team members, who also supervised the questionnaires and assisted the participants with additional information.

Sixty-two people were selected from the aforementioned group of those interested in taking part in the workshops, and they joined the preliminary project and took part in an introductory test, consisting of intellectual activity assessment using a modified MMES scale, the clock-drawing test as well as tests assessing balance and syncope proneness consisting of an orthostatic hypotony test, a balance test and the "stand up and go" test. The aim of these tests was to assess general intellectual and physical fitness. It was performed by a team of three experienced and specially trained (by a doctor) nurses and one test coordinator. The group of 62 people was examined on 6 different days so that each nurse had to examine 10 people every day. All tests were done in the morning because of seniors' better physiology in that time of day. Every patient took approximately 40 minutes to test.

All the patients volunteered with enthusiasm and participated actively in the tests. The result was that 5 people were given a low score (which was not a reason to exclude them from the project). The most common mistakes included incorrect backward counting and spelling, difficulty remembering, incorrect drawing of pentagons. An incorrect clock-drawing test result correlated with a lower general score, while some results here were incorrect despite a high general score. A link was observed between an incorrect clock-drawing test result and incorrect drawing of pentagons (problems with abstract thinking and spatial perception).

A large group of patients exhibited high arterial pressure, much higher than in the first test performed using the MMES technique, which proves that patients were stressed. Therefore, it is advised for blood pressure tests to be performed first. Unfavourable results of balance tests were not too frequent. All results, together with the assessment and advice, were passed on to the patients' family doctors (general practitioners – GPs) for continued observation and therapy for those who needed it.

After having finished the *@ktywny Senior* project workshops, medical examinations were done again and consisted of cholesterol level checking and spirometry. Repeating preliminary tests was rejected because of the high mean preliminary score. People with a high cholesterol result or unfavourable spirometry result were examined by a general practitioner and given advice as well as directed to further tests or therapy (one person was directed to extensive gastroenterological tests, eight patients were advised a lung RTG, two people had their hypolipemic therapy altered, eight people were advised and taught breathing exercises). The tests were done in 4 days (three hours a day) by a team consisting of one nurse, one medical technician and one medical doctor.

Conclusion

I did not give numeral and statistical data about the results of medical tests described in this article, because they are significant for further observation or therapy of the patients and were transferred to their individual documentation. The quality of the medical examination was assessed by the participants in a questionnaire after having finished the workshops and is a component of the report from the *@ktywny Senior* project included in this volume.

It is worth noting here that participants of the project were fully functional physically and intellectually and motivated to improve their health. They mainly needed some encouragement and an individual invitation to take part – the personalized invitations proved to be the key for the success of the whole project. The performed tests resulted in very good marks from participants and the perception of the patients' GP as one which positively stands out from other local GPs.

The medical staff's commitment to performing their tests is a necessary condition of success, but the time and means needed for realizing such a project are available only in at least medium-sized healthcare facilities. However, external financing may be pursued.

The result of medical tests done in the *@ktywny Senior* project was successful prophylaxis and making the patients realize that their health and fitness depends mainly on themselves. The seniors declared the will to continue performing the exercises they had been taught. It is to be expected that it will reduce their need for health services through higher comfort of life and reducing risk factors such as sedentary lifestyle, loneliness and the feeling of exclusion.

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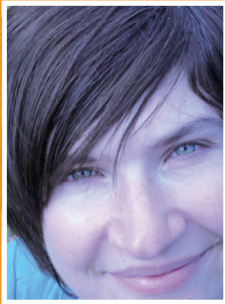
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Physical activity in therapy and prevention of old age illnesses

Summary: Physical activity as a means to maintain and improve one's health is currently becoming more and more appreciated among seniors. It is the most effective way of preventing lifestyle diseases such as ischaemic heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, and also, which is especially significant

for older people, prolongs life, prevents early death and severe illness consequences. Physical activity is recommended even for people over 80 years of age. There exists broad scientific proof of the major impact of physical exercise programs on shaping health and physical fitness in old age.

Key words: physical activity, preventive medicine, old age illness treatment.

The importance of physical exercise in preventing and treating senior age illnesses and general enfeeblement is currently growing because of the expanding group of older people in our society.

Physical activity is recommended up to very old age in a form which is appropriate for a person's age, general state and existing illnesses. Older people who generally suffer from more diseases may benefit most from physical activity, but implementing exercise routines for unfit people with a sedentary lifestyle also poses some risk.

In the *@ktywny Senior* project the research and teaching staff of the University School of Physical Education (AWF) in Wrocław shared their knowledge on physical activity in old age with the participants. A program of physical education was realized, which consisted of 6 hours of lectures and 24 hours of exercise. The aim was to present to the seniors the tasks and methods of physical activity in preventing and treating the most common old age illnesses as well as teaching them physical exercises and motivating seniors to supplement their basic physical activity.

The lectures included the following subjects:

1. The role of physical activity in old age.
2. The role of physical activity in the treatment of cardiovascular illnesses, which are typical of old age.
3. The role of physical activity in preventing and treating respiratory system illnesses.
4. Physical activity in locomotive organs diseases typical for old age.
5. Cognitive and emotional dysfunctions in old age.
6. The role of physical activity in treating cancer.

The workshops proposed for the seniors included:

- elements of psychotherapy,
- general gymnastics,
- terrain therapy,
- practical learning of Nordic Walking,
- balance and fall prevention training.

The assumed effects of the training were for the participants to acquire knowledge and skills concerning the aims and tasks of physical activity, its relation to preventing selected old age illnesses, the functions of control and self-control of the body's reaction to physical activity, the structure of a training unit and forms of organizing physical exercise training.

The expected result was to increase mobility as well as physical and social activity of the participants.

Do seniors appreciate physical activity?

Physical activity is a significant element of successful aging. Unfortunately, a considerable decrease of physical activity is observed in older people, which means restricting it to everyday chores such as shopping, cooking, helping children and grandchildren.

However, retaining high physical activity in old age is one of the factors which correlate with a longer life expectancy and allows seniors to keep their autonomy and independence, therefore improving their quality of life¹.

Physical involution in old age includes a variety of regressive changes, which lead to losing energy efficiency of the organism, reducing its fitness and immunity, which means more frequent health problems. Fitness of the organism decreases significantly because of worse coordination between cooperative processes². A decrease of physical strength and energy of the organism takes place, which promotes a passive lifestyle. A person in such a situation has to show a great will of being active and be aware of the benefits of regular physical activity. It is an important challenge³. Was it taken up by the "active seniors"?

Surveys conducted in the course of the project (in the form of anonymous questionnaires) reveal the following image of seniors taking part in the project: the youngest participant is 60, the oldest is 83 (with the average age being 67). The beneficiaries are people with higher (52.72%) or secondary (32.72%) education, each of them had been retired or had been receiving disablement benefits for 1 to 45 years. Most of the participants were women (70.90%). The most commonly mentioned reason for participating in the project was the desire to be able to use the computer and internet. The second stated reason was to broaden knowledge and increase physical activity. Recreational physical activity was declared by 45.44% of participants. 56.35% of participants appreciate physical activity in their daily lives, 38.20% do not have any opinion on this topic and 5.45 do not believe that physical activity helps them in their daily lives. The most commonly declared health problems were hypertension (49.09%), osteoarthritis (10.90%), type 2 diabetes (5.45%) and osteoporosis (5.45%). The physical education training sessions were described as satisfactory by 58.18% of beneficiaries, 10.87% described them as unsatisfactory, 4.54% as moderately satisfactory with 25.45% not stating any opinion.

Workshops offered to seniors in the Universities of the Third Age span almost every possible field of knowledge – foreign languages, technology, humanities, etc. They also include physical activity (rehabilitation, field trips, etc.)

Benefits of regular physical activity are manifested not only physiologically, but also psychologically, sociologically, and culturally.

¹ M. Kaczmarczyk, E. Trafiałek, *Aktywizacja osób w starszym wieku jako szansa na pomyślne starzenie*, „Gerontologia Polska” 2007/15/4, pp. 116–118.

² N. Wolański, *Rozwój biologiczny człowieka. Podstawy auksologii, gerontologii i promocji zdrowia*, Warszawa 2006.

³ H. Zielińska-Więczkowska, K. Kędziora-Kornatowska, T. Kornatowski, *Starość jako wyzwanie*, „Gerontologia Polska” 2008/16/3, pp. 131–136.

The existing state of knowledge about the role of physical activity in old age

Low physical activity in old age is the result of actual old age physiological changes, a lifestyle leading to hypodynamia as well as coexisting pathological changes. The decrease in oxygen efficiency, strength, power and elasticity of muscles as well as increased illness incidence lead to increasing dependence on other people. Physical activity may effectively minimize or eliminate the undesirable effects of illnesses and physical inability of old people, giving them the chance to increase physical efficiency, re-socialise and reintegrate.

Lengthening the period of physical fitness and independence, and so improving quality of life is the main positive effect of physical activity⁴⁾. A minimal oxygen efficiency of approximately 13–14 ml/kg/min of maximum oxygen consumption (VO₂ max) is required for independent functioning. Physical training increases physical fitness and delays the fall in VO₂ max for about 10–20 years for physically active people when compared to those with a sedentary lifestyle. Even a slight increase in VO₂ max (3–4 ml/kg/min) can prolong the period of physical fitness and independence by 6–7 years⁵⁾.

The effect of regular physical activity on the circulatory system is the one documented best. Physical activity modifies the risk factors of ischemic heart disease: hypertension, fat management disturbance, overweight and obesity, sedentary lifestyle and low physical activity, smoking, inaccurate glucose tolerance and diabetes, incorrect diet, personality and behaviour types.

Physical activity has its significant role in healthy diet and nutrition state of old people⁶⁾, prevents excessive fat tissue aggregation, and slows down the loss of fat-free body mass with age. It probably also has a positive effect on certain hormones (growth hormone -GH, insulin-like growth factor 1 -IGF1), whose level in blood decreases with age⁷⁾. The positive effect of regular physical activity on muscle mass and strength, also in handicapped people in very advanced age⁸⁾, is well documented. Basic metabolism decreases with age, usually without a proportional reduction in basic nutritional elements intake. A higher energy requirement in physically active

⁴⁾ T. Kostka, M. Bonnefoy, J-R. Lacour, W. Drygas, *Metody oceny aktywności ruchowej u osób w podeszłym wieku*, „Polski Merkuriusz Lekarski” 1997/3/18, p. 299; M. Berger, *The role of physical activity in the life quality of older adults*, “Physical activity and aging”, 1988, 42; S.F. Shephard, *Physical fitness: exercise and ageing*, „Principle and practice of geriatric medicine” 1991.

⁵⁾ T. Kostka, M. Bonnefoy, J-R. Lacour, W. Drygas, op.cit.; S.F. Shephard, op.cit.

⁶⁾ T. Kostka, M. Bonnefoy, J-R. Lacour, W. Drygas, op.cit.; S.F. Shephard, op.cit.

⁷⁾ T. Kostka, M. Bonnefoy, J-R. Lacour, W. Drygas, op.cit.; S.E. Borst, W.J. Millard, D.T. Lowenthal, *Growth hormone, exercise, and aging: the future of therapy for the frail elderly*, “Journal of the American Geriatrics Society” 1994/42, p. 528.

⁸⁾ T. Kostka, M. Bonnefoy, J-R. Lacour, W. Drygas, op.cit.; M. Fiatarone, E.F. O’Neill, N.D. Ryan, K.M. Klements, G.R. Solares, M.E. Nelson, S.B. Roberts, J.B. Kehayias, L.A. Lipsitz, W.J. Evans, *Exercise training and nutritional supplementation for physical frailty in very elderly people*, “The New England Journal of Medicine” 1994/330, p. 1769.

people ensures a quantitatively and qualitatively better fulfilment of basic nutritional elements requirements.

The data from a growing amount of experimental and clinical research points to the positive effect of regular physical activity on the immunity system. The positive effect of physical activity on the psyche and quality of life is also significant⁹⁾. The positive effects of regular physical activity on health, i.e. a statistical longer life expectancy has also been proved both qualitatively and quantitatively¹⁰⁾.

Advice for seniors

Advice concerning physical activity for older people is given individually. It depends on their age, coexisting illnesses, general state and the degree of physical fitness. Regular physical activity of seniors should contain elements of stamina (endurance) training, resistance exercise and stretching, which ensures the effect on oxygen efficiency, muscle strength as well as agility, balance and coordination.

Endurance exercise, i.e. march, running, swimming, biking should be done twice a week for at least 20 minutes. Exercise intensity should ensure that it is done on a 40–60% heart rate reserve level (the difference between maximum heart rate during a cardiac stress test and while resting). Dynamic resistance exercise should be done twice a week for at least 20 minutes and include 1 set of exercises covering 8–10 exercises engaging the most important muscle groups. The weight intensity should be selected in such a way that each exercise can be done 10–15 times (10–15 repetitions of a given move). Stretching exercise (gymnastics, stretching) is best performed everyday for 5–10 minutes¹¹⁾.

Conclusion

As it was mentioned earlier, the interest of people over 60 years of age in the *@ktywny Senior* programme was the result of a desire to learn to use the computer, and also (to a lesser extent) broadening knowledge and improving physical activity. One of the preferred forms of work was taking part in fitness gymnastics trainings lead by physical culture and physiotherapy specialists.

Preventing social marginalization of the older generation and promoting a healthy lifestyle is a major challenge for Polish gerontology and social institutions. It is of top priority for maintaining health and independence to an advanced age.

⁹⁾ T. Kostka, M. Bonnefoy, J-R. Lacour, W. Drygas, op.cit.; M. Berger, op.cit.

¹⁰⁾ R.S. Paffenbarger, R.T. Hyde, A.L. Wing, I.M. Lee, D.L. Jung, J.B. Kampert, *The association of changes in physical-activity level and other lifestyle characteristics with mortality among men*, "The New England Journal of Medicine" 1993/328, p. 538.

¹¹⁾ B. Wizner, *Prewencja gerontologiczna*, [w:] T. Grodzicki, J. Kocemba, A. Skalska, *Geriatry z elementami gerontologii ogólnej*, Gdańsk 2006, pp. 53–59.

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Lifestyle and the attitude of seniors towards health

Summary: In order for one's lifestyle to be healthy one ought to adhere to a particular set of rules such as regular physical activity, rational diet, and hygienic way of life. These elements are important at all stages of life, regardless of one's state of health or social status. These rules become essential in relation to seniors, since with age their influence on the quality of life, i.e. dexterity, self-reliance, and independence

increases. More and more exercise programmes aimed at people in the age of late adulthood and promoting healthy lifestyle are being introduced. Unfortunately, all physical activity in this age is commonly associated with rehabilitation or sanatorium treatment. The few physical activity classes organised by some centres are usually related to secondary prevention of illnesses and they are initiated and supervised by medical staff.

The @ktywiny Senior project is an attempt at addressing the issue of the lack of general activation of people of over 60 years of age. Not only has the introduction to Physical and Health Education class schedule enriched the offer – it has also had an influence on the increase of seniors' awareness and competences related to the lifelong need to care for their health. The course schedule included a series of lectures and practical activities aimed at presenting to the seniors the positive sides of regular physical activity and allowing them to experience the favourable effects of exercise.

Research aimed at studying the lifestyles of seniors with emphasis on the relations between their physical activity and their attitude towards health was conducted throughout the research. Hypothesis stating that the level of awareness of issues related to health determines the lifestyle of seniors in regard to their physical activity was formulated. Each of the participants received "BM/HF" "Healthy Lifestyle" questionnaires. The results of the research on health-related behaviour suggest that the behaviours that the seniors most often ignore are regular physical exercise and the ability to control the level of stress. The health model characteristic of seniors is ambiguous, although the seniors tend to gravitate to the holistic-functional model.

On the basis of the analysis of information related to the elements of seniors' lifestyles in the context of the results determining the health model it may be stated that although the respondents' average results were higher in the holistic-functional part their general level of physical activity was low. Perhaps seniors do not recognise the connection between health and the necessity to improve their physical prowess. In light of the research results it may be concluded that there is an urgent need to introduce Physical and Health Education classes to programmes aimed at people over 60 years of age.

Key words: people in late adulthood, attitude towards health, healthy lifestyle, physical activity.

Harmonious lifestyle ensuring good state of health both in the physical and the psychological sense is termed wellness in world literature, and its main theme is "feel good". One leading a healthy lifestyle should adhere to a set of rules such as regular physical activity, rational diet and hygienic way of life. These elements are important at all stages of life, regardless of one's state of health or social status¹⁾.

The mentioned rules become essential in relation to seniors, since with age their influence on the quality of life, i.e. dexterity, self-reliance, and independence increases²⁾. It must be emphasised that the state of the general motor skills in old age is determined by the lifestyle and state of health of the earlier stages of life. The influence of former stages of life on the motor skills are never as substantial earlier in life³⁾.

Lifestyle can be defined as a set of behaviours characteristic of the general model of functioning of an individual or a group, depending on the social and cultural norms in which the individual or the group exist as well as on one's system of values, attitude, and knowledge, along with the general economic, political, and

¹⁾ E. Kozdroń, *Program rekreacji ruchowej osób starszych*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 5-7.

²⁾ E. Kozdroń, op.cit., pp. 5-7.

³⁾ W. Osirski, *Antropomotoryka*, Poznań 2000, pp. 75-77.

organisational social structure⁴⁾. Therefore, the repetitive, complex, and long-lasting behaviours that are influenced and modified by the psychosocial environment – the family, society, and culture – are to constitute one's lifestyle.

Among the numerous human behaviours the actions performed in order to be healthy and those that have a documented influence on health can be identified. These behaviours can be divided into those improving health and the harmful ones. Actions such as the aforementioned rational diet, avoiding drugs, managing stress, and being physically active can be called positive, and smoking cigarettes, alcohol abuse, aggressive behaviour, and poor diet – negative⁵⁾.

Not only does physical activity favour shaping the body and beating records in sport – it is also an integral element of health which determines its state to a large extent. Regular physical exercise is one of the most important factors favouring delaying involution processes. It has been proposed that action is more effective than pharmaceuticals. Active way of spending leisure time stimulates physical fitness, improves cardiovascular performance, increases the elasticity of vascular walls, and improves the agility of the senses. Even though currently there is no scientific evidence that physical exercise prolongs life we know that it improves its quality⁶⁾.

What lifestyle one chooses depends on his understanding of health and illness, as well. Perceiving health as a value can be explained from the perspective of the biomedical and the holistic-functional theories of health.

In the biomedical model (BM) health and illness are separate states; one is either healthy or ill; there are no intermediate states. Both remain outside one's control. In this approach, health is reduced to the rules of biological functioning on the basis of congenital conditions. Health is not perceived as a state of normality. Medical practice only identifies the lack thereof. Remedying procedure is initiated in such case; therefore, doctors are not interested in healthy individuals: "If I wanted – as a healthy person – to ask a doctor for advice to improve that health (to be more healthy) I would be suspected of mental illness and sent to a detention ward"⁷⁾.

Illness, in turn, constitutes a situation when human organism cannot resist negative factors from the outside environment. From the point of view of those supporting this approach, it is then that medical care is needed⁸⁾.

The biomedical model understands convictions and emotions as psychological aspects that cannot determine bodily health. Biochemical causes of illness are the object of analysis. The social, psychological, and behavioural aspects are not included in this

⁴⁾ B. Woynarowska, *Zdrowie młodzieży szkolnej w Polsce i innych krajach*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 9–10.

⁵⁾ A. Łuszczynska, *Zmiana zachowań zdrowotnych – dlaczego dobre chęci nie wystarczą?*, Gdańsk 2004, pp. 14–21.

⁶⁾ W. Osiński, *op.cit.*, pp. 75–77.

⁷⁾ A. Pawłucki – unpublished work, in possession of the author.

⁸⁾ H. Sęk, I. Ściagała, T. Pasikowski, M. Beisert, A. Bleja, *Subiektywne koncepcje zdrowia. Wybrane uwarunkowania*, „Przegląd Psychologiczny” 1992, 35(3), pp. 351–363; H. Sęk, T. Pasikowski, I. Ściagała, *Sense of Coherence and Subjective Health Concepts*, „Polish Psychological Bulletin” 1994, vol. 25(1), pp. 15–23.

approach. According to this paradigm human body is a biomachine and in the case of a dysfunction, i.e. illness, a doctor appears as an engineer fixing a broken mechanism and the person suffering from the dysfunction "has nothing to say" in his case.

Holistic-functional model

Health is a changing resource and illness is a deficit of the immunologic resource whose potential is to a large extent dependent on the consciousness of the subject who may learn how to be healthy, promote health, secure it, and participate in the process of healing, when as a result of the influence of pathogens and the lowering of immunity it comes to illness (i.e. a breaking of the dynamic equilibrium). From the perspective of this model it is stated that one creates health and one gets ill – the illness does not "get to" a person. According to the holistic-functional theory a human being is a subject (who makes decisions about the changes that influence him) as well as a social person involved in relationships with society and an individual adaptively integrated with the natural environment. This means that one's health is:

- determined by one's decisions
- influenced by others
- determined by the "forces of nature"⁹⁾.

Health-related convictions will, therefore, have a major influence on making health-related decisions.

Various types of physical exercise programmes for people in late adulthood that promote healthy lifestyle are being implemented in the world. However, they cannot be directly introduced into Polish reality. That is because the expectations, conditions, and opportunities for seniors in our country are different. We should, therefore, aim for creating our own standards and developing effective methods of activation of the society. In Poland there is no consistent programme for the promotion of physical activation of seniors. All physical activity in this age is commonly associated with rehabilitation or sanatorium treatment. The few physical activity classes organised by some centres are usually related to secondary prevention of illnesses and they are initiated and supervised by medical staff. First of all, the promotion of healthy lifestyle in Poland lacks:

- a correctly implemented social health policy on all government levels,
- effective health education at all stages of ontogeny,
- common access to physical culture classes for women as well as men over 60 years of age in accordance with their health, agility, and financial capabilities¹⁰⁾,
- and qualified instructors for this age group.

The @ktywny Senior project is an attempt at filling the gap that has appeared in the area of the general activation of people of over 60 years of age. Not only has the

⁹⁾ A. Pawłucki – opracowanie własne dostępne u autora.

¹⁰⁾ E. Kozdroń, op.cit., pp. 5-7.

introduction to Physical and Health Education class schedule enriched the offer – it has also had an influence on the increase of seniors' awareness and competences related to the lifelong need to care for their health.

The course schedule included a series of lectures and practical activities aimed at presenting to the seniors the positive sides of regular physical activity and allowing them to experience the favourable effects of exercise. Achieving the aforementioned aim was made possible by the implementation of the following objectives:

- ❖ Increasing the awareness and passing on information on the subject of physical activity of people in late adulthood and its importance in heightening the quality of life.
- ❖ Acquiring of a selection of methods and forms of physical activity aimed at maintaining and improving health by seniors.

The subject matter of the lectures included issues related to physical culture, the connection between physical activity and health, prevention of premature ageing, prophylactics of diseases of civilisation, and methods and forms of physical activity. The theoretical classes constituted a great way of introducing safety measures related to taking up physical activity; they have also increased the seniors' motivation to participate in physical exercise during the programme and after it was finished.

The practical classes constituted the second part of the series, during which the "active seniors" could use the information that they had acquired in a number of forms of physical exercise performed on the basis of the suppositions of health training. The above objectives can be divided into three groups because of their different aims.

The forms of physical activity that are to be found in the first group include the exercises shaping physical agility and elements of strength training. The seniors were introduced to the Nordic walking hiking technique and using the poles for increasing muscle tone. The aims for this group were realised in the form of general exercise, as well.

The second group included relaxation exercises and elements of Eastern exercise systems. The aim of this group was to equip the seniors with stress management skills as well as introducing them to a „new” way of spending leisure time constituting an alternative to the traditional ways of passive relaxation. The seniors participated in a session of Schulz autogenic training, they attempted simple Tai chi and yoga sequences, and they also had the chance to experience the positive influence of self-massage on the body.

The third group were the recreational games aimed at introducing the pleasant character of physical activity.

Research aimed at studying the lifestyles of seniors with emphasis on the relations between their physical activity and their attitude towards health was conducted throughout the research. Hypothesis stating that the level of awareness of issues related to health determines the lifestyle of seniors in regard to their physical activity was formulated.

Each of the participants received "BM/HF" "Healthy Lifestyle" questionnaires.

The "BM/HF" questionnaire constructed by Helena Sęk and her co-workers includes twenty statements which include the suppositions related to the biomedical and holistic-functional models. The BM part includes a set of questions that describe health in relation to medical categories, some genetically determined, in which each individual is obliged to adhere to the norms set by doctors. In the HF part the questions are developed in accordance with the thesis that health is a process of dynamic equilibration of the requirements of the environment.

The "Healthy lifestyle" questionnaire consisted of six parts:

Category I: smoking cigarettes,

Category II: alcohol abuse and use of medication,

Category III: diet habits,

Category IV: physical exercise and fitness,

Category V: stress management,

Category VI: security

Each part included questions that the respondent answered on a three-degree scale: usually, sometimes, hardly ever. There was a certain number of points connected with each answer, with the maximum sum of the questions of each category equalling 10. Depending on the sums the results were divided into four groups:

10–9 pts. – very good

8–6 pts. – good

5–3 pts. – mediocre

2–0 pts. – bad

The results of the research on health-related behaviour suggest that the behaviours that the seniors most often ignore are regular physical exercise (cat. IV) and the ability to control the level of stress (cat. V).

In almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the surveyed negative attitude towards regular physical activity could be observed. Therefore, the seniors have confirmed the regularity that ageing of the body is connected with abnegation of activity. Furthermore, it may be assumed that the research subjects do not have sufficient knowledge on the subject of the negative results of avoiding regular physical activity. Only less than 15% of the respondents declare that they take care of their health though physical exercise (Fig. 1).

The seniors taking part in the research do not recognise the necessity to improve muscle strength. More than half of the respondents never do the strength exercises that constitute an integral element of health training. Efficiency of the organism and muscle strength determine the level of general fitness, which, in turn, determines the quality and successfulness of everyday life activities. 50% of the surveyed admit that they sometimes take part in physical activities, at least 3 times a week (q. 2). The same number of respondents claims that they sometimes maintain the desired body mass (q. 1). The most positive answers are related to spending leisure time with the family while gardening or playing games (q. 4) (Fig. 2).

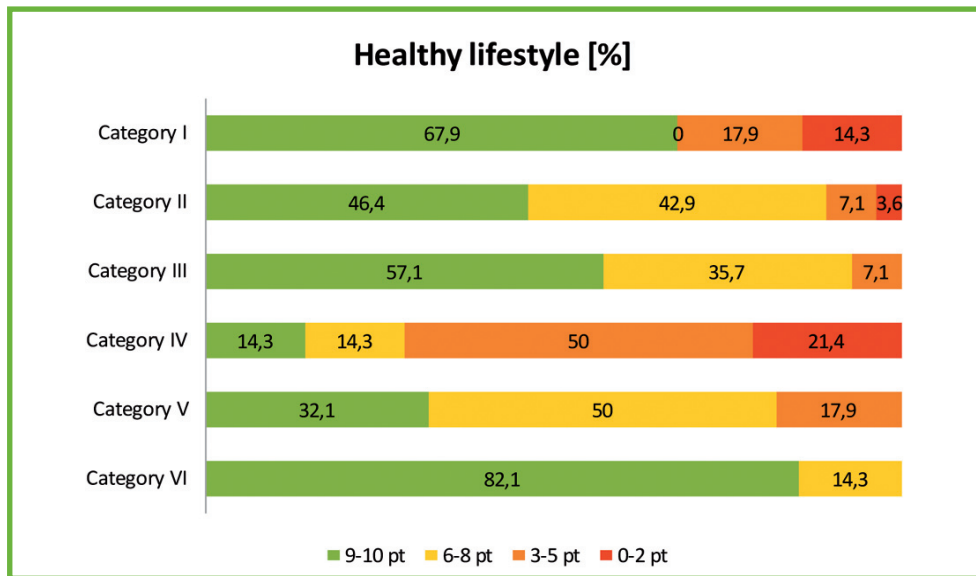


Fig. 1. The percentages describing the health-related behaviours of seniors in the particular categories of actions

Source: Developed by the author.

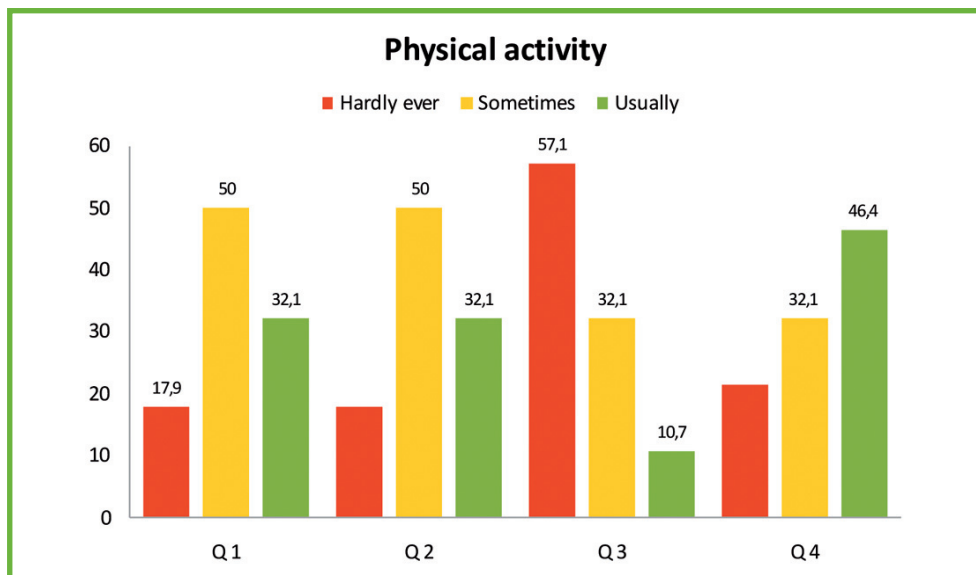


Fig. 2. The percentages describing the health-related behaviours of seniors in the category: exercise and physical activity

Source: Developed by the author on the basis of the following questions: 1. maintaining the desired body mass, 2. regular stamina exercise, 3. regular strength exercise, 4. recreational physical activities with the family.

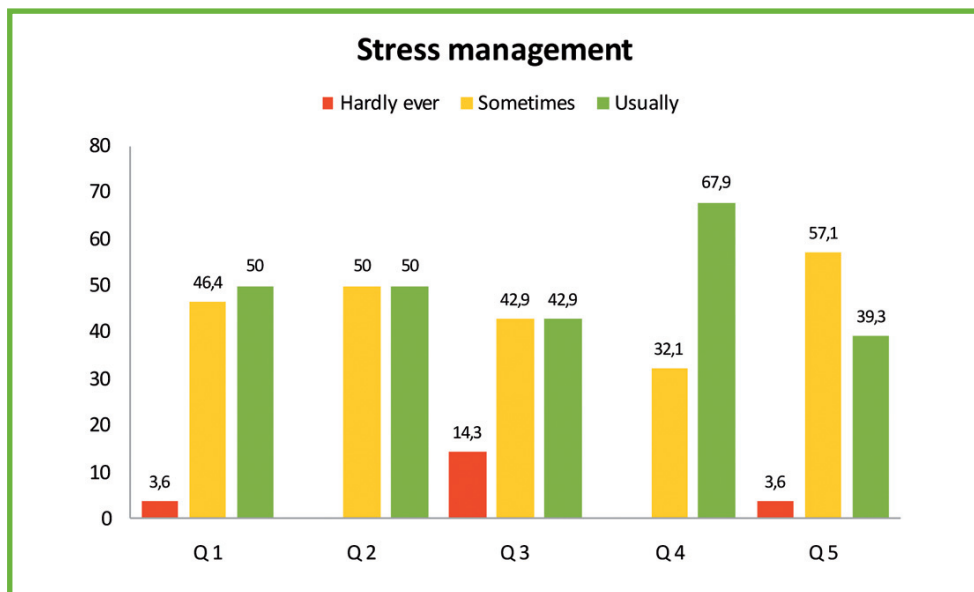


Fig. 3. The percentages describing the health-related behaviours of seniors in the category: stress management

Source: Developed by the author on the basis of the following questions: 1. I do things that make me happy, 2. I can relax and express my feelings, 3. I can predict stressful situations, 4. I have relatives whom I can ask for help, 5. I participate in group activities.

Yet another factor contributing to the acceleration of the processes of ageing of the organism is stress. In the references there are two types of stress described – the negative one (distress) and the positive one (eustress). The contemporary seniors should learn to eliminate the results of distress caused by, among others, retirement or the speed of development of civilisation (the problem of social exclusion).

The conducted research indicates that in the category of stress the respondents declare that they cannot always control negative emotions, especially in difficult situations – 14,3% (q. 3). Majority of the seniors are not completely certain of their actions in the face of stress. About half of the surveyed confirm that there are situations that generate their negative emotions and that only sometimes they are able to control them. Over 2/3 of the respondents declare that they can ask their relatives for help if they need to (q. 4) (Fig. 3).

In the hypothesis it was assumed that one's attitude towards health has an important influence on the lifestyle of seniors in relation to regular physical activity.

The results of the conducted survey justify the statement that it is not possible to unambiguously identify the model more popular with the seniors participating in the research. The average of the declared answers was slightly higher in the case of the holistic-functional model (Chart 1). It may indicate that that the senior consciously participate in the forming of their health. They can also understand that their health potential is conditioned by the lifestyle they prefer.

Chart 1. The statistical amounts characterising the convictions of the seniors in relation to health

	Average	Standard variation	Minimum	Maximum
BM	29,95238	5,609019	19,00000	42,00000
HF	35,75000	4,870668	23,00000	44,00000
Total	65,15000	9,225244	47,00000	81,00000

Source: Developed by the author.

Considering the research results in the context of the results related to lifestyle one may come to the conclusion that despite the average results being higher in connection with the holistic-functional model the level of the physical activity of the respondents was too low. Perhaps seniors do not recognise the connection between health and the necessity to improve their physical prowess.

However, the authors of the present article believe that the above reflections require further exploratory proceedings.

In light of the research results it may be concluded that there is an urgent need to introduce Physical and Health Education classes to programmes aimed at people over 60 years of age. The curriculum should include problems related to the importance of general physical and recreational activity in preventing involution processes. Furthermore, theoretical information should be complemented with a series of practical activities in health training and exercise compensating for the inactivity in seniors' everyday lives. Putting emphasis on stress management skills (techniques and methods of relaxation) as well as the ways of eliminating fatigue (passive and active leisure time) is important, too.

The increasing number of seniors is a cause of the need to concentrate on providing this social group with opportunities of further education and enriching their personalities through discovering the world around them. The positive reception of the *@ktywny Senior* programme expressed by the participants in the evaluation survey of the project may serve as a confirmation of this belief. The seniors evaluated the way of conducting the classes, the competences of the instructors and, last but not least, the information and skills acquired during the course very highly.

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Annex to the article: A sample Health Education for people in late adulthood activity plan

I. The theoretical part

Lesson plan 1

Topic: *Physical culture – a way to longevity and health of the contemporary man*

Lecture

- ❖ The aim of the lecture is to introduce the participants to a selection of theories related to the perception of human body in contemporary physical culture.
- ❖ We discover the world of the culture of human body and the numerous forms of participation in physical culture.
- ❖ How to define the notion of physical culture in contemporary world?
- ❖ What does it mean that the body constitutes an existential value and what is the attributing of symbolic sense to the body?

Lesson plan 2

Topic: *The importance of physical activity in human life from birth to late old age*

Lecture

- ❖ Why is it necessary to undertake physical activity regularly as a child, a teenager, a person in the "working age", and a senior?
- ❖ Explanation of the notions of motor skills, agility, and coordination.

Lesson plan 3

Topic: *Seniors in contemporary popular culture*

Lecture

- ❖ What shapes the identity of contemporary youth?
- ❖ What do the notions of consumer culture, instant culture, and body and sexuality culture mean?
- ❖ Can grandparents have an influence on the bringing up of grandchildren and teenage grandchildren in contemporary culture?

II. The practical part

Lesson plan 4

Topic: *Improving Nordic walking technique – health level*

Health-related cultural competences:

Axiological competence: acquiring knowledge on the subject of the importance of participation in health training in maintaining physical prowess

Technical competence: acquiring training heart rate measurement skills

Number of participants: 20

Location: city park

Equipment: Nordic walking poles for each of the participants

Duration: 90 min.

No	Name and description of the task	Number/ duration	Comments
1	<p>Organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Greeting, checking the preparation for the exercises 	2 min.	We remind the participants that in case they do not feel well they should adjust the intensity of the exercises themselves
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Measuring resting heart rate 	1 min.	
2	<p>Intrductory part</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Marching without poles</i> Move your arms (your elbows straightened) and legs dynamically – <i>Marching with poles</i> <p><u>Stationary exercises</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Moving your shoulders in circles</i> Hold the poles together with an overhand grip parallel to the ground, move the shoulders in big circles forwards backwards – <i>Bending and straightening your wrists</i> Hold the poles as in the above, raise and lower the poles without moving your arms – <i>Bending and straightening your arms</i> Hold the poles together with an underhand grip, hands down. Raise the poles to shoulder level – <i>Raising your arms</i> Hold the poles as in the above, with an overhand grip On „1” raise your arms over your head, on „2” lower them behind your head, on „3” raise, and on „4” lower them in front – <i>Standing up on your toes</i> Drive the poles in into the ground in front of you, stand up high on your toes and hold – <i>Swinging your legs</i> Poles held as in the above, swing your leg in the sagittal plane – <i>Marching on the spot</i> Poles held as in the above, raise your knees imitating marching – <i>Lowering the body</i> Drive the keys into the ground in front of you at a distance allowing a straight angle between your body when lowered and your legs. Between lowering the body stand up and push your hips towards the pole handles – <i>Lunges</i> Drive the poles into the ground by your sides. Lunge forward. Push the poles when moving backwards. 	<p>2 min.</p> <p>2 min.</p> <p>× 15 × 15</p> <p>× 20</p> <p>× 20</p> <p>× 20</p> <p>× 20</p> <p>× 20</p> <p>× 20</p> <p>2 × 10</p> <p>× 20</p> <p>× 8</p> <p>2 × 5</p>	<p>We pay attention to the correct position of elbows during the exercise</p> <p>We pay attention to regular breathing during the exercises</p> <p>We ensure the participants’ knees do not protrude in front of their feet during the lunges</p>

	<p>– <i>Turning the poles</i> Hold the poles together in front of you at shoulder level, arms close together. Turn the poles as far as possible.</p> <p>– <i>Kayaks</i> Hold the poles as in the above, arms at shoulder width. Move the arms in a manner imitating rowing in a kayak. forwards backwards</p> <p>– <i>Turning the body</i> Hold the poles as in the above. Turn your body without bending your arms</p> <p>– <i>Squats</i> Drive the poles into the ground at a 45 degree angle. Bend your hip joints, knees, and ankle joints (squat)</p> <p>– <i>Raising your arms</i> Hold the poles together in front of you, arms down. Raise your arms – inhale through your nose Lower your arms- exhale through your mouth</p> <p>– Measuring the training heart rate</p>	<p>× 15</p> <p>× 10 × 10</p> <p>2 × 8</p> <p>× 10</p> <p>× 4</p> <p>1 min.</p>	<p>We ensure that the participants push the poles when standing up.</p>
3	<p>Main part <u>Improving the technique of marching with poles.</u></p> <p>– <i>Marching with poles</i> Revising the basic technique</p> <p>– <i>Marching and jumping</i> After every five steps jump up without using the poles</p> <p>– <i>Marching and turning</i> After every five steps turn around full circle.</p> <p>– <i>Marching one after another</i> „Number 1” sets the tempo and the direction. „Number 2” follows.</p> <p>– <i>Marching in pairs</i> The participants stand one after another, „number one” holds the handles of the poles, „number 2” the other ends. March simultaneously swinging your arms energetically.</p> <p>– <i>Marching and pushing both poles</i> March and push at both the poles simultaneously.</p> <p>– <i>Marching with energetic pushing</i> March using your arms alternately, draw back energetically, and push hard on the straps.</p> <p>– Measuring the training heart rate</p>	<p>× 1</p> <p>× 2</p> <p>× 2</p> <p>× 2</p> <p>× 2</p> <p>× 2</p> <p>× 2</p> <p>1 min.</p>	<p>The exercises take place in a 50 m long straight line</p> <p>Turn to the right, then to the left interchangeably.</p> <p>Change the leaders</p> <p>Change the leaders</p> <p>We ensure that the participants keep their elbows straight while marching</p> <p>We ensure that the technique is correct with the increased energy of marching</p>

	<p>Increasing stamina – <i>Marching with sustained medium intensity</i> After 10 minutes of marching measure your training heart rate</p>	20 min.	
	<p>– Measuring the training heart rate</p>	1 min.	
4	<p>Final part – <i>Marching with low intensity</i> March with substantially lower speed, do not hold the handles, let the poles hang down on the straps</p> <p>– <i>Marching and raising your arms</i> Hold the poles together in front of you, arms down. After every five steps raise your arms and inhale.</p> <p>– <i>Turning your body</i> Put the poles held together on your shoulders. Turn your body.</p> <p>– <i>Side bends</i> Hold the poles together over your head. Do side bends.</p> <p>– <i>Opening</i> Drive the poles into the ground in front of you. Inhale, opening your chest – draw the handles to the sides. Exhale closing your chest – draw the handles together.</p> <p>– Measuring training heart rate</p>	<p>2 min.</p> <p>× 4</p> <p>× 10</p> <p>× 10</p> <p>× 5</p> <p>1 min.</p>	<p>We ensure that the side bends are done in the coronal plane.</p>
5	<p>Organisation Collecting the equipment, discussing the class, saying goodbye</p>	2 min.	

Lesson plan 5

Topic: *Learning exercises with use of newspapers that improve the general agility*

Health-related cultural competences:

Communicational competence: explaining to the participants the rules of selection of physical exercises proper for their age

Technical competence: the ability to use an unusual piece of equipment in shaping general agility

Number of participants: 20

Location: gym

Equipment: newspapers, mats

Duration: 45 min.

No	Description of the task	Number/ duration	Comments
1	Organisation – Greeting, checking the preparation for the exercises	1 min.	The participants stand in a circle
2	Introduction – <i>Energy</i> Everyone says their names and grades their energy on a 1 to 10 scale – <i>Marching</i> Swing your arms and legs energetically – <i>Marching and exercising</i> ✓ Raise your arms, clench and unclench your fists ✓ Raise your arms, turn your hands around ✓ Arms down – bend and straighten your elbows ✓ Arms down – swing your arms forwards and backwards ✓ March raising your knees high ✓ Tiptoeing ✓ March, raise your arms sideways – inhale with your nose, lower your arms – exhale with your mouth ✓ March, get your newspaper	1 min. 1 circle × 15 2 × 10 × 10 2 × 10 ½ circle ½ circle × 4 ½ circle	Around the circle Around the circle The instructor gives each of the participants a newspaper sheet
3	Main part <u>Exercises with newspapers</u> – <i>Hats</i> Put unfolded newspaper on your head, march and keep straight, do not let the newspaper fall – <i>Raising your arms</i> March, hold the paper with both hands in front of you, hands down, on „one“ put your arms behind your head, one „two“ put them back down – <i>Slalom</i> Put the newspaper down on the floor. Move taking small steps around the papers left by other participants until you reach yours. – <i>Marching wide – narrow</i> Place the papers as in the above. March between the papers and cross over each paper putting your legs wide apart – <i>Reach for the newspaper</i> Stand over your newspaper. Inhale – raise your arms over your head, exhale – lower your arms and bend, reaching for your paper – <i>Circling around your body</i> Hold your newspaper in one hand at head level. Circle the paper around your body going down, passing the paper from hand to hand	½ circle ½ circle 1 circle 1 circle × 3 × 4	Marching in circle On the spot in circle Circling around the head, the neck, the chest, the stomach, the thighs, the knees, the calves; both ways

<p>– <i>Safety pin</i> Hold your newspaper in one hand. Change the hand behind your back; one hand up, one hand down</p>	× 10	
<p>– <i>Straightening your arms</i> Hold your newspaper in both hands at hip level. Straighten both arms.</p>	× 10	
<p><u>Exercises on the newspaper</u> – <i>Marching</i> March on the spot with the paper in front of you. Step on and off the paper.</p>	× 20	The participants stand in circle. The papers on the floor.
<p>– <i>Wide and narrow</i> March on the spot over the paper. Narrow – march on the paper, wide – the paper between your feet.</p>	× 20	
<p>– <i>Balance</i> The paper between your feet. Move your body weight from one leg to the other.</p>	× 20	
<p>– <i>Heel</i> Do as above bending your knee backwards at a straight angle</p>	× 20	
<p>– <i>V</i> The newspaper in front, march forward with legs wide (paper between your feet), and backwards – legs narrow</p>	× 20	
<p>– <i>Folding the newspaper</i> Put the paper on the floor, fold it and unfold it using your feet</p>	2 min.	
<p><u>Exercises lying down</u> – <i>Reaching your knees</i> Hold your paper with both hands in front of you. Raise your head and body, touch your knees with the paper.</p>	× 15	The participants lie down in circle, knees bent, feet on the floor
<p>– <i>Raising your hips</i> Hold the paper with one hand at hip level. Raise your hips, move the paper to the other side.</p>	× 15	
<p>– <i>Feet up</i> Hold the paper between your feet. Straighten your knees, raise your feet.</p>	× 15	
<p>– <i>Turning your body</i> Hold the paper with both hands in front of you. Turn your body so that the paper touches the floor on one side and your knees on the other.</p>	× 10	
<p>– <i>Newspaper behind your head</i> Hold the paper with both hands at hip level. Put the paper behind your head – inhale, back down – exhale.</p>	× 4	The participants stand in circle. Numerous changes in direction.

	<p><u>Group exercises</u></p> <p>– <i>Passing the newspapers.</i> The participants stand quite close to each other. At the instructor's signal they pass the papers to the right, picking papers up from the left</p> <p>– <i>A ball</i> Each of the participants divides the paper in two halves. They put them in one hand and form a ball</p> <p>– <i>A battle</i> The participants are divided into 2 groups. Each team gets half of the gym. On the signal each group tries to throw as many newspaper balls to the other half as possible</p>	2 min	
		1 min.	
		2 min.	
4	<p>Final part</p> <p>– <i>Marching</i> The participants march freely around the gym, each takes two paper balls</p> <p>– <i>On target</i> Each of the participants throws his paper balls at a target placed in the middle of the circle</p>	1 min.	The participants stand in circle
		1 min.	
5	<p>Organisation</p> <p>Discussing the class, saying goodbye</p>	1 min.	

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Activity of seniors in the context of health promotion

Summary: Contemporarily, more attention is called not only to the treatment of diseases, but to the promotion of healthy lifestyle, as well. Introduction of the idea of health promotion is of crucial importance in case of seniors, due to the poor health of this group of people in Poland. However, the main aim of health promotion in relation to seniors is not to prolong their lives, but to improve the quality of their lives. Quality of life is to a large extent related to activity (physical, intellectual, social), in the broad sense of the term, which constitutes of the various actions undertaken by an individual. The broader the range of the actions, the better the quality of life. It is obvious that our activity gradually decreases with age. Numerous factors of biological, psychological, and social character have an influence on this issue.

The most important aims of health promotion among people of advanced age are related to the following areas: maintaining and increasing the general physical and psychological agility, maintaining and improving health-related self-control, maintaining the high level or improving the

standard of living and hygiene-related conditions, fostering the existing social relationships and improving their quality and encouraging the starting of new social contacts. Furthermore, when undertaking actions related to seniors one must bear in mind the necessity to prevent the deprivation of people of advanced age and the need for their activation and self-reliance – also in the area of health.

Key words: health promotion, seniors, old age, ageing of society, activation of seniors, sociology of medicine.

Contemporarily, more attention is called not only to the treatment of diseases, but to the promotion of healthy lifestyle, as well. Health promotion is to be understood as "the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. To reach a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to identify and to realize aspirations, to satisfy needs, and to change or cope with the environment"¹⁾. One of the most important aims of health promotion is to ensure that individuals and communities undertake health-related actions. The strategy of conducting pro-health initiatives at the central level without providing individuals with the opportunity to participate in them is rejected contemporarily. Health promotion is no longer perceived as the exclusive area of activity of the health service. Currently it is based first and foremost on the activities of local communities and inter-sector cooperation. The third sector and non-governmental organisations are of crucial importance here²⁾. From this perspective health promotion is first and foremost a social and political initiative requiring broad activity of groups and individuals³⁾.

Among all the rules of health promotion the position of self-reliance of communities and individuals is especially high. Self-reliance understood as the ability of individuals to take control of their lives and health⁴⁾ is contemporarily treated as the most important aim of health promotion – as its imperative, as it were. Apart from gaining control at the level of an individual it is also essential to motivate people to participate actively in improving health within the communities that they live in.

The idea of health promotion as a postulate to take into consideration the exceptionally broad spectrum of the factors influencing health which is perceived

¹⁾ *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*, "Health Promotion International" 1986, 1 (4); tłumaczenie polskie: J. Karski, *Podstawowe dokumenty dotyczące promocji zdrowia. Pełne i skrócone wersje podstawowych dokumentów polskich oraz Światowej Organizacji Zdrowia*, [in:] J. Karski, Z. Słońska, B.W. Wasilewski (eds.), *Promocja zdrowia. Wprowadzenie do zagadnień krzewienia zdrowia*, Warszawa 1994, p. 424.

²⁾ M. Synowiec-Piłat, *Promocja zdrowia i profilaktyka onkologiczna w działaniach organizacji pozarządowych*, Toruń 2009, pp. 69–79.

³⁾ Z. Słońska, *Promocja zdrowia – zarys problematyki*, „Promocja Zdrowia. Nauki Społeczne i Medycyna”, *Rocznik I*, Issues 1–2, 1994, p. 43.

⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 832.

in a "positive" way (as a resource that is available to individuals in their everyday lives or a process of seeking and maintaining balance in the face of numerous strains and difficult situations that we encounter in our everyday lives), with its dependence on psychological, social, economic, and environmental factors taken into consideration. According to K. Tones most of the people active in health promotion accept „the popular definition of 'health gain' that defines a major purpose of health services as follows:

- Adding years to life: reducing avoidable deaths,
- Adding health to life: reducing disease and disability,
- Adding life to years: enhancing quality of life⁵⁾.

Implementing the idea of health promotion is of particular importance in the case of seniors whose situation in relation to health in Poland leaves a lot to be desired. Although the average life span in Poland is now about 4 years longer (currently 78 years for women and 73 years for men), the life expectancy of Poles is lower than of the citizens of most European Union member states⁶⁾ (ca. 2 years lower in the case of women, and ca. 3 years in the case of men). This may serve as a proof that the health of Polish seniors is worse. The results of one nationwide survey indicate that 23% of Poles over 50 years of age perceive their health as poor or very poor⁷⁾.

The situation is determined by a number of factors such as the ineffectiveness of medical centres and the entire health care system (the insufficient system of financing the procedures connected with treatment of seniors, the insufficient number of specialists in geriatrics and the lack of geriatric day care wards, the poor training system of medical staff of all levels in the various specialisations related to geriatrics). Furthermore, seniors often make complaints about having to wait long to be provided a place in care and medical aid centres and the lack of awareness of their specific needs among the medical staff. There is a lack of local seniors clubs and day care centres⁸⁾.

Apart from professional, social, and educational inactivity the poor health of Polish seniors results from their generally inactive lifestyles, as well. Most of the retired declare that they watch TV (92%), listen to the radio and music (79%), and read books, magazines, and newspapers (75%). Nearly a half spend time gardening (49%), helping their families run the house (47%), and taking care of their grandchildren (40%). One in three seniors does sport (general exercise or swimming, going for a walk), one in five uses the internet, one in seven travels within the borders of Poland, and one in

⁵⁾ K. Tones, *Health Promotion, Health Education, and the Public Health*, [in:] R. Detels, J. McEwen, R. Beaglehole, H. Tanaka (eds.), *Oxford Textbook of Public Health*, Oxford 2004, p. 832.

⁶⁾ *The World Bank, "From Red to Gray" 2007*, [qtd. in:] *Raport o kapitale intelektualnym Polski*, Zespół Doradców Strategicznych Premiera, Kancelaria Prezesa Rady Ministrów, Warszawa 2008, p. 131.

⁷⁾ ESS 2006, *Obliczenia DAE MIPS*, [qtd. in:] *Raport o kapitale intelektualnym...*, op.cit., p. 131.

⁸⁾ *Raport o kapitale intelektualnym...*, op.cit., p. 131.

eight is active in the community. One in twelve pensioners (8%) mentioned other forms of spending time, with meeting friends and recreational activities such as knitting (women) or fishing (men) constituting the most common ones⁹⁾.

In turn, the results of World Values Survey indicate that about 90% of Poles over 50 years of age are inactive in such areas as sport, culture, and initiatives for the community¹⁰⁾ (for example, in the USA 29% of this group are inactive, in Denmark – 30%, in Austria – 50%, in Czech Republic – 55%, in Spain and Portugal – 63%, in Romania and Ukraine – ca. 90%).

However, the main aim of health promotion in relation to seniors is not to prolong their lives, but to improve the quality of their lives. Quality of life is to a large extent related to activity (physical, intellectual, social), in the broad sense of the term, which constitutes of the various actions undertaken by an individual. The broader the range of the actions, the better the quality of life. It is obvious that our activity gradually decreases with age. First of all, it is the result of biological factors. The state of health worsens, diseases become more common (e.g. chronic diseases, cancer, diabetes, old age diseases: dementia, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, degenerative and locomotor system diseases, eyesight and hearing diseases, etc.), which results in the impairment of the agility of seniors. This, in turn, leads to limitation of contacts with other people or even to social isolation of seniors. This isolation may be deepened by the gradual dying out of relatives as well as friends; in consequence, the number of close people that one may count on support from is inevitably reduced. Furthermore, psychologists argue that this process is accompanied by a loss of trust in others and unwillingness to establish new social relationships, which further decreases the activity of seniors.

Apart from the aforementioned agents, some factors of social character influence the decrease in activity typical of old age. The notion of seniors losing their former social roles is emphasised in this context. First of all, one's role in the group of friends and acquaintances is changed or lost. Losing one's professional role due to retirement or receiving disability benefits constitutes yet another issue.

As to the professional activity of seniors Poland has the last position among EU countries, with the average employment index in the group of people of 55–64 years of age 1.5 times lower than the EU average. Professional inactivity of Polish seniors is often accompanied by withdrawal from social life¹¹⁾. The inactivity is further deepened by the fact that few members of the group of people of 55–64 years of age – 16.2%¹²⁾ – take part in some form of education. That is why people of over 50 years

⁹⁾ A. Kolbowska, *Sytuacja ludzi starszych w społeczeństwie – plany a rzeczywistość*, Komunikat CBOS, BS/160/2009, p. 13.

¹⁰⁾ World Values Survey 1999, [qtd. in:] *Raport o kapitale intelektualnym...*, op.cit., p. 128.

¹¹⁾ *Raport o kapitale intelektualnym...*, op.cit., [qtd. in:] A. Kolbowska, op.cit., p. 1.

¹²⁾ *Rynek pracy a osoby bezrobotne 50+.* Bariery i szanse, Warszawa 2007, [qtd. in:] *Raport o kapitale intelektualnym...*, op.cit., p. 129.

of age who are often fully physically and psychologically healthy cease to be professionally and socially active only because they do not update their knowledge and competences¹³.

However, nationwide surveys indicate¹⁴, that the pensioners who work are substantially more active than those who do not. They participate in cultural life (they go to the cinema, theatres, and concerts, they visit museums and art galleries, they read), work voluntarily to support the needy, local communities, and parishes, and they take part in active forms of recreation (sport, travelling). The pensioners who do not work take care of grandchildren more often than those who do. Seniors who do not participate in social life are marginalised and are treated like a useless burden.

A. Kozubska states the areas of life in which the seniors are more prone to marginalisation are:

- a) participation in the employment market;
- b) participation in social contacts outside the family;
- c) participation in political life;
- d) presence in mass culture and social communication (exclusion from the media or incidental mentioning of these groups and perpetuating the stereotypical, often negative, and always simplified image)¹⁵.

The problem of decreased income and the worsening of one's material standing is also connected with retirement or becoming professionally inactive due to health reasons. This, in turn, limits one's social activity and influences the quality of their fostering. These life events constitute a source of high stress and often lead to low self esteem.

As nationwide surveys indicate, the problem that as much as $\frac{2}{5}$ people fear in relation to old age are difficulties with making a living and bad material conditions¹⁶. 58% of seniors declare a need of financial support, with only slightly over a fifth of them receiving it (22%)¹⁷. As to the plans for old age of the younger respondents – most of them declare the need to remain active until advanced age in many areas; however, in the case of most of the pensioners withdrawal from social life is observed¹⁸. The economic problems of seniors limit their self-reliance heavily, and constitute an influence on their everyday decisions. A person of advanced age in Poland is often faced with dramatic everyday choices – whether to use the money that one has for food, the rent, or e.g. medicines. The seniors are not usually able to

¹³ *Raport o kapitale intelektualnym...*, op.cit., p. 129.

¹⁴ A. Kolbowska, op.cit., p. 2, 12.

¹⁵ A. Kozubska, *Wykluczeni 50+ (na rynku pracy)*, Projekt współfinansowany ze środków Unii Europejskiej w ramach Europejskiego Funduszu Społecznego, p. 2.

¹⁶ B. Wciórka, *Polacy wobec ludzi starych i własnej starości*, Komunikat z badań CBOS, BS/172/2000, p. 14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁸ A. Kolbowska, op.cit., pp. 12–13.

afford to fulfil all of their needs, even the basic ones. In the social campaign organised in 2010 by Fundacja Dbam o Zdrowie („I take care of my health” foundation) called „Wybory 2010” (elections/choices 2010) it was emphasised that 4 millions of Poles do not buy medicines due to their difficult financial situation. One in three Poles does not buy prescription medicines, which means that they do not start or continue treatments advised by doctors. Doctors alert that breaking of a medicine treatment often constitutes a source of serious diseases. As a result of this situation people often have to be admitted into hospitals¹⁹⁾.

However, one of the most significant social issues influencing the quality of life of seniors as well as their activity is the social attitude towards old age. Contemporarily the social status of seniors is subject to substantial degradation. Not only do seniors have less knowledge in comparison with pre-modern societies; their wisdom and experience are also questioned and perceived as useless relics. The major social changes that took place in the 19th century, the increasing number of seniors, and the progress of medical science have undoubtedly had an influence on this perception of old age in our culture.

One must bear in mind that the consequence of the great social processes of the 19th century, i.e. industrialisation, urbanisation, scientific development – including medicine – was not only the progress of civilisation (mainly in relation to technology) but first and foremost the enormous cultural and social changes, including changes in lifestyle. Since the turn of the 20th century changes of the system of values – concentration on youth, agility, and health – have been observed as a result, and these led to emphasis on the visual aspect of old age. Old age is often associated with infirmity, intellectual problems, and ugliness as well as loneliness, suffering, social incompetence and being a burden to the young²⁰⁾. One must also bear in mind the changes that have been gradually occurring within families; first of all the disappearance of the multi-generational family (in which such phenomena as ageing and death were always present and tangible, natural, and emotionally close), individualisation of family members (the good of an individual is now more important than the good of the entire group) and quickly becoming independent of one’s family – especially in the economic sense. Seniors are needed less and less. We do not want to think about old age, just like we do not want to think about death.

Since the 1960’s old age is being presented by the media as a shameful disease – old age is an unwelcome phenomenon that needs to be hidden and an attempt must be made to delay its symptoms in one’s looks. Therefore, ageing is no longer perceived as a natural stage in life. Contemporarily old age needs to be fought against, since the value of a human being is reduced to an attractive, young image.

¹⁹⁾ http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/kampanie,1099,procent_ktory_likwiduje_wybory, dostęp: 16.07.2010.

²⁰⁾ Tendencję tą potwierdzają także najnowsze badania socjologiczne – np. K. Wądołowska, *Polacy wobec ludzi starszych i własnej starości*, Komunikat z Badań CBOS, BS/157/2009, p. 11.

The aforementioned changes in the attitude towards old age are contemporarily manifest in two main currents. The first of them is the presentation of seniors – in the media, in art – as through a twisted lens – with irony, ridicule, and mockery. The exponents of the second current present the uselessness of seniors for the rest of the society. Old age is a contradiction of sexuality, beauty, joy, and pride.

Health, youth, and prowess have gradually become the determinants of a life of merit, wisdom, and good. According to A. Kępiński the inability to reconcile oneself with the process of ageing is caused first and foremost by the technological development – technological environment serves to enforce in oneself the sense of control of the surrounding world; that is why it is harder to submit to the laws of nature. A defiance of death and old age is born. A defiance that has always been a part of human nature, but never in so fierce a form as nowadays²¹). The highest measure of one's usefulness is one's performance, which is obviously unfavourable to seniors. It should come as no surprise that due to the fear of rejection or even social exclusion seniors attempt to be as full of energy, as committed, or even to look as good as the young. They realise that with a decrease in performance they will become useless. In connection to this, as U. Jarecka argues, old age has become a shameful disease, with a part of the media image (usually related to advertisements) appearing to follow the idea that ageing as an unwelcome phenomenon needs to be hidden; it is also suggested that the main task of an adult individual (most often – an adult woman) is the prevention of ageing. To get old is to „pick up” a shameful disease, i.e. to be old is to be ill. The symptoms are visible in one's looks that constitute one's image. Wrinkles are „inadvisable” (unwelcome), and to look young is our „duty” from the perspective of what is socially acceptable²²). As a result, ageing is no longer seen as a natural process and it becomes an area of struggle. With such solutions a plastic surgery, anti-ageing creams, and hair dyes to cover the hoar at hand we become convinced that the we may be victorious in the struggle, that we may be able to cheat old age, that we can avoid it (advertisement campaigns, e.g. the Dove Pro-age campaign).

We want to preserve our youth – or to look young and attractive – as long as possible; for these constitute the synonyms of one's value. In the images of old age, especially the ones presented by the media, a tendency to combat the laws of ageing, nature, and human biology is observed. The pursuit to make old age unreal is observed. At the same time the seniors themselves have a tendency not to treat the process of ageing as something inevitable – in the past it was thought that ageing was essentially damage made by the passing of time. However, the perception of the processes of ageing as obvious and natural is gradually changing; the progress

²¹) A. Kępiński, *Rytm życia*, Kraków 1992, p. 223.

²²) U. Jarecka, *Starość w mediach – konteksty, tendencje i przemilczenia*, [in:] A. Kojder, K.Z. Sowa, *Los i wybór. Dziedzictwo i perspektywy społeczeństwa polskiego. Pamiętnik XI Ogólnopolskiego Zjazdu Socjologicznego Rzeszów – Tyczyn, 20–23.09.2000*, Rzeszów 2003, p. 515.

in medical science and diet has shown that it is possible to eliminate or greatly reduce most of the symptoms of ageing that used to be seen as unavoidable. Due to better diet, hygiene, and health care the average life expectancy is much longer than it was a even a hundred years ago²³). Anthony Giddens proposes that it is one of the manifestations of the so-called "socialisation of nature".

Since the second half of the 20th century a process a rapid increase of the number of seniors is observed in developed societies²⁴), which has caused the necessity for changes in the perception of the importance and roles of seniors in societies, as well as the necessity of changes in the social policy. The needs of seniors can no longer be treated as marginal; to the contrary, the representatives of all sectors of social life must take seniors with their needs and problems into account. That is why the seniors are increasingly present in the media, advertisements, and political programmes. Seniors have become trendy²⁵). This trend is, however, of a specific character – seniors must be reckoned with, because there is more and more of them; it is worthwhile to gain the support of this group, yet the degradation of the image of an old person still occurs. While in the earlier presentations of old age emphasis was put first and foremost on its negative features, currently the images are glossed over or even ridiculous. Urszula Jarecka states that in the visual the "dark" sides of life such as disease, old age, and death are not present since old age – i.e. intellectual and physical damage – does not constitute entertainment. Old age, as one of the „unpleasant" topics is not present, because when seniors are shown efforts are made to beautify this stage of life, to strip its image of realism²⁶). Old age is presented as a third youth. The emphasis put on beautifying the process of ageing is manifest in this aspect. The problems of the ageing of the body, and of the interests and needs of seniors are mentioned; however, they are still shown from the perspective of youth. Old age is stripped of dignity, naturalness, and human warmth in an oblique manner. The importance of that which seniors may provide for others – the family, the representatives of their professions, and the society on its entirety – is downgraded.

It is difficult to expect any radical changes in the attitude towards old age typical in our culture soon or for the cult of youth to be replaced by respectful acceptance of old age and everything that it brings – in the physical, psychological, and social aspects.

Research results are consistent in indicating²⁷) that the group that express the most kindness towards seniors are three social circles – the family (79%),

²³) A. Giddens, *Socjologia*, Warszawa 2006, p. 185.

²⁴) K. Szczerbińska, *Problemy opieki zdrowotnej nad ludźmi w wieku podeszłym*, [in:] A. Czupryna, S. Piździoch, A. Ryś, W.C. Włodarczyk, *Zdrowie publiczne. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Vol. 2, Kraków 2001, p. 417–424; A. Giddens, op.cit., p. 185.

²⁵) J.P. Bois, *Historia starości. Od Montaigne'a do pierwszych emerytur*, Warszawa 1996, p. 11.

²⁶) U. Jarecka, op.cit., p. 523.

²⁷) B. Wciórka, *Czy zmienia się stosunek Polaków do starości?*, Komunikat z dwusetnego badania aktualnych problemów kraju CBOS, BS/33/2007, p. 5.

the neighbours (68%), and the parish community (64%). The environments that are less kind to seniors are shops (46%) and former places of work (41%). According to the respondents, negative attitudes such as indifference and dislike are prevalent in other social environments. It needs to be emphasised that the centres and agencies that ought to be helpful to seniors are often unkind – health care centres (39%), government offices (32%) – the same applies to the streets (25%) and the means of public transport (20%). Only one in four respondents perceives the young generation as kind to seniors. Half of the respondents (49%) notice the indifference of young people, one in six (17%) – dislike, and only one in four (25%) believe that young people are kind to seniors²⁸.

It needs to be mentioned that the negative attitudes towards seniors are often expressed in the form of stigmatization or labelling of this social group. As it was formerly stated, in the contemporary society youth, health, and prowess are attributed the highest value. What does not fit in this canon, e.g. old age, is perceived as deviance. People of advanced age are frequently subject to branding social reactions such as ridiculing, exclusion from a group, social degradation, isolation from the so-called "normal" people, verbal and physical aggression, etc. The names given to seniors may serve as example. Such expressions as old coot, buzzard, geezer, wrinkly, etc, are often uttered by the younger members of our society. However, the most important issue to be discussed are the consequences of such stigmatization. E. Lemert argues that social stigmatization is a process of two stages and it includes the primary and the secondary deviation²⁹. Primary deviation constitutes in the traits (in this case – being old, being physically or intellectually incapable) or behaviours (forgetfulness, difficulty with dealing with everyday life tasks, apathy) discordant with the norm of a certain environment. At this stage, however, the social environment perceives these features as e.g. minor missteps, and the "perpetrator" remains within the circle of the formerly adopted social roles. It is the belief of Lemert that primary deviation has little influence on one's psychological structure and does not lead to changes in one's personality, self-esteem, and the adopted social roles. The negative social reactions to primary deviation cause greater and deeper psychological strain and lead to assigning one the role of a deviant, leading to secondary deviation. Secondary deviation is connected with such phenomena as social control, punishment, segregation, stigmatization. These reactions lead to changes in one's social structure and one's self-esteem. An individual influenced by secondary deviation becomes an individual whose life and identity concentrate around the fact of deviation. Secondary deviation may be treated as a method of self-defence, an attack, or adaptation of an individual in relation to the problems the he faces as a result of the social reaction to his primary deviation. The reactions of condemnation, degradation, and isolation

²⁸) Ibid., pp. 6–7.

²⁹) E.M. Lemert, *Social pathology, A systematic approach to the theory of sociopathic behavior*, New York 1951; A. Kojder, *Co to jest teorianaznaczaniaspolecznego?*, „StudiaSocjologiczne” 1980, 3/78.

are especially important here. Secondary deviation may constitute a strategic and accepted solution to the difficulties that an individual has to face because of his stigmatization³⁰).

The process of stigmatization leads to the acceptance of one's image as a deviant. It is not only other people who react to an individual with labelling, defining one as e.g. suffering from sclerosis, an awkward geezer or a cripple, and treating one accordingly, but it is the individual that perceives himself as such, identifying with the assigned role. The stronger the negative social reaction, the higher the probability that it will become an internalised behavioural model.

Labelled individuals (as e.g. useless old men) are to be perceived in their environment from the perspective of their deviant roles. Other roles (e.g. those of a husband, a grandfather, a friend, a professional) become less important or ignored altogether. Such situation makes it difficult or even impossible for a stigmatized individual to return to "normal" social roles or to participate correctly and satisfactorily in social life. It is a result of the fact that negative stigmatization of a person may often lead to a deviant career³¹). An individual is stripped of the opportunity to function within conventional social groups (among friends, professionals, family members), which leads one to the social margin, where deviant behaviours are accepted and rewarded. Then, according to Becker, a deviant identity is formed³²). One is assigned the role of a deviant and cannot get rid of it. This phenomenon is termed the trap of deviation – an individual withdraws from the society in order to avoid further punishment which leads to further stigmatization caused by the withdrawal or its consequences that in turn results in a deepened withdrawal or aggression. An individual is labelled. How one is perceived by the social environment becomes a part of the deviant orientation and determine one's actions. The group blocks the non-deviant roles (e.g. professional, educational) undertaken by an individual and discriminates him, even though they may at the same time declare to be supportive. The deviant is rewarded for playing the stereotypical role (e.g. a helpless old man unable to learn anything new, like using a computer). The role of the deviant gradually eliminates all other roles.

The existence of a number of the so-called deviant stereotypes³³), in certain societies needs to be mentioned. Stereotypes constitute the means of organising reality; they make interactions easier in situations when one does not know what to expect from a partner one meets for the first time. The partner is put into one of the stereotypical categories which makes the contact easier, as the stranger is associated with a kind of men one already knows. The greater the social distance

³⁰) E.M. Lemert, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

³¹) A. Kojder, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

³²) H.S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the sociology of deviance*, Glencoe 1963.

³³) A. Siemaszko, *Granice tolerancji. O teoriach zachowań dewiacyjnych*, Warszawa 1993, pp. 295–297.

between an individual and the given category of persons the greater the probability that the individual's image of the category is stereotypical. Even though we might not meet the mentally ill, the disabled, seniors, etc, every day, we "know more or less" who they are and how they behave. We frequently see seniors in their stereotypical roles – as poor, ill, helpless, demanding, and benefitting from social aid³⁴). It is important that the actions aimed at seniors serve to overcome the negative stereotypes and to demonstrate that just like in the case of the young members of society among the seniors there are also many interesting and creative individuals, full of commitment and merit, who may constitute a source of inspiration for others³⁵).

One of the consequences of deviant stereotypes is that it is expected of deviants to act according to our, often erroneous, perception of who they are and how they behave. And so there is a stereotype of a senior as a helpless, dependent individual. If seniors submit to the stereotypical role they may lose their former competences of coping with various everyday life situations. This may lead to the so-called "acquired helplessness". According to one of the surveys conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center the help aimed at seniors fulfils their needs to a large extent. However, symptoms of over-protectiveness were observed among those who provided the help³⁶). It must be added that over-protectiveness as well as failure to fulfil the needs is harmful to people of old age, because they limit the seniors' independence and self-reliance.

The results of a survey conducted by the Public Opinion Research Center indicating that only one in five of the respondents would like to spend old age living with the family, and that over a half (57%) would rather live in their own residence and only occasionally benefit from the help of others, including the family, confirm the belief that seniors want to be independent and make their own decisions. Furthermore, one in six of the surveyed (17%) choose solutions that do not require any help of their relatives³⁷).

Frequently seniors decide not to ask for help and to be self-reliant in relation to everyday life activities, despite their health problems. On the one hand they do not want to be a burden to their relatives, on the other, they often cannot admit to themselves that they actually need help. Therefore, it is crucial for the help provided for seniors to be adequate to their needs, in order not to limit their independence and self-reliance. It is essential for the younger generations to remember to undertake

³⁴) B. Szatur-Jaworska, 2008, *Uczestnictwo osób starszych w sferze publicznej*, [in:] B. Szatur-Jaworska (ed.), *Stan przestrzegania praw osób starszych w Polsce. Analiza i rekomendacje działań*, Warszawa, p.115.

³⁵) The Spoko Senior (cool senior) social campaign organised in 2009 by Fresh Brand Design for the Mali Bracia Ubogich association may serve as an example; http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/kampanie,903,kiedy_ostatnio_sluchales_babci, retrieved: 16.07.2010.

³⁶) B. Wciórka, *op.cit.*, introduction.

³⁷) *Ibid.*, p. 14.

the actions necessary for the prevention of marginalisation of seniors in numerous aspects of life, apart from direct help and care³⁸⁾.

The processes and social attitudes discussed above may speed up the worsening of the psychophysical form of seniors, a decrease in their activity, withdrawal from social life, increase in the number of suicides, and even social isolation.

Emphasis must be put on the problem of suicides of seniors, since it is a topic that is often avoided. There are few statistical analyses and empirical researches related to this problem. However, the number of suicides in this age group is growing. It seems necessary to make those of the immediate environment of seniors along with as high a number as possible of the members of younger generations aware that any suicidal tendencies and symptoms thereof displayed by seniors that directly or indirectly indicate the intention to end one's life should always be taken seriously. Such individuals should be provided with special care and social support, with the help of psychological therapy or psychiatric treatment, if possible.

Social isolation is particularly dangerous to seniors. The following factors increasing the risk of isolation of people of advanced age are mentioned in reference books³⁹⁾ – the age of over 80, widowhood/single status, divorce/separation, no children, being single in a household, bad material standing, recent hospitalisation, and moving to a new location.

The results of a number of researches indicate that social isolation increases morbidity and mortality rate among seniors. It ought to be mentioned hereby that the loss of a spouse is one of the most stressful situations for people of all ages and especially those in old age which over the following two years, most significantly over the following six months, has a substantial influence in the form of increasing morbidity and probability of death of the widowed person, especially in the case of men⁴⁰⁾.

For example, A. Ikeda, H. Iso, H. Toyoshima et al⁴¹⁾ have confirmed empirically that men who have never been married have a higher mortality rate related to diseases of the cardiovascular system, the respiratory system, and outside factors. Among women who have never been married the indicators were lower, but the general mortality rate was significantly higher. Divorced and widowed men are at a moderately higher risk of death due to diseases of the cardiovascular system, outside factors, and all other causes than married men; however, such tendency was

³⁸⁾ These problems were addressed in e.g. the Cane social campaign organised in Israel in 2009, initiated by the Adam LeAdam organisation; http://www.kampaniespoleczne.pl/kampanie,696,podeszle_samobojstwo, retrieved: 25.06.2009.

³⁹⁾ K. Szczerbińska, op.cit., pp. 432–433.

⁴⁰⁾ M. Sokołowska, *Socjologia medycyny*, Warszawa 1986, p. 201; E. Rogucka, *Spoleczne uwarunkowania nadumieralności mężczyzn w Polsce*, Wrocław 1995.

⁴¹⁾ A. Ikeda, H. Iso, H. Toyoshima, Y. Fujino, T. Mizoue, T. Yoshimura, Y. Inaba, A. Tamakoshi, *Marital status and mortality among Japanese men and women: the Japan Collaborative Cohort Study*, BMC Public Health: 2007 May 7; pp. 7–73.

not observed among women. To recapitulate, being single was connected with a higher mortality rate than in the case of being married in relation to men as well as women. Divorce and widowhood increase the mortality of men, but not women. The results suggest that single, divorced and widowed individuals are potentially more prone to unfavourable effects on health.

Furthermore, an American research conducted among people of 65 years of age and more confirms that social isolation leads to men being prone to death of ischemic heart disease 5 years sooner⁴²⁾.

In relation to the above the providing of social support, in the broad sense of the term, becomes an essential aspect of health promotion among seniors. Social support is understood by Antonovsky as one of the elements of the sense of coherence, i.e. the sense of self-reliance (the ability to use the resources available to others)⁴³⁾.

M. Barrera proposed three methods of evaluating informal social support⁴⁴⁾ – the evaluation of rooting in the society (e.g. the indicators of the frequency of contacts with others), the received support (e.g. measuring the actual help provided by the members of the community), the perceived support (e.g. subjective evaluation of the supportive exchange, such as satisfaction with social support).

Limitation of the self-reliance of seniors increase with age, and in the period of late old age they become an actual threat. The first difficulties in functioning appear sporadically at the age of 55–59, with one in nine of the people of 60–64 years of age declaring such difficulties, and with one in five people making complaints about them in older groups. It is obvious that the people in the so-called late old age (75 years of age and more) are the most prone to these problems⁴⁵⁾.

Research results indicate that nearly half of all Poles (45%) personally know a person who has problems with some of the everyday life tasks, such as attending to their own affairs in government offices, doing shopping, doing housework, preparing meals, getting dressed or taking care of personal hygiene. Furthermore, 7% of the surveyed admit to currently having such difficulties themselves⁴⁶⁾.

Entering old age is also the time when numerous anxieties appear. First and foremost the fear of disease and infirmness (71%) and the loss of self-reliance, becoming dependent on other people, and being a burden to others (58%) appear, then the fear of the threats to material standing, and worsening of the standard

⁴²⁾ P.M. Engl, E.B. Rimm, G. Fitzmaurice, I. Kawachi, *Social Ties and Change in Social Ties in Relation to Subsequent Total and Cause-specific Mortality and Coronary Heart Disease Incidence in Men*, "American Journal of Epidemiology" Vol. 155, Issue 8, pp. 700–709.

⁴³⁾ A. Ostrowska, *Styl życia a zdrowie. Z zagadnień promocji zdrowia*, Warszawa 1999, p. 109.

⁴⁴⁾ M. Barrera, *Distinctions between social support concepts, measures, and models*, "American Journal" of „Community Psychology” 1986, 14, pp. 413–445, [in:] N. Krause, *Social support*, [in:] R.H. Binstock, L.K. George [eds.], *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*, Academic Press, San Diego – San Francisco – New York – Boston – London – Sydney – Tokyo 2001, p. 27.

⁴⁵⁾ B. Wciórka, op.cit., p. 2–3.

⁴⁶⁾ Ibid., p. 1.

of life (41%) are placed. Furthermore, the vision of a lonely life, of losing the family (37%) and – less frequently – suffering and the sense of uselessness (20%) constitute the sources of anxiety among seniors. Relatively few respondents feel anxious because of the uncertainty of who will take care of them when they are old and who and where will live with them (15%)⁴⁷⁾.

Research results indicate that having social support is very helpful even in relation to the acceptance of the process of ageing⁴⁸⁾. Furthermore, seniors when included in the lives and activities of supportive social groups enjoy better physical⁴⁹⁾ and psychological⁵⁰⁾ health and well-being in comparison to those who do not maintain meaningful relationships with others. Social support substantially increases the chances for a longer life⁵¹⁾.

For example, in the research conducted in Augsburg⁵²⁾ on a study sample of 1,030 men and 957 women aged 55–74 social integration was measured with the use of social relationships index which contained the following variables – presence of a spouse, the number of close friends and relatives, and relationships with close friends and relatives. It has been confirmed empirically that the mortality rate was higher among the men who lived alone in comparison with married men. Low mortality was observed among those with numerous social relationships. The mortality rate of those who did not provide information about their social relationships was similar to that of those who had few social relationships. The results indicate that individuals with few social relationships have a higher mortality rate over a shorter period of time than those who maintain numerous social contacts. Social relationships were presented as an important predictor of the mortality of senior men and women.

In yet another research the relations between the changes in social ties (in 1982–1985) and the further death until 1993 was assessed on the sample rate

⁴⁷⁾ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁸⁾ J.W. Rowe, R.L. Kahn, *Successful aging*, New York 1998.

⁴⁹⁾ H.B. Bosworth, K.W. Schaie, *The relationship and social environment, social networks, and health outcomes in the Seattle Longitudinal Study: Two analytic approach*, "Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences", 1997, 52B, p. 197–205.

⁵⁰⁾ N. Krause, *Anticipated support, received support, and economic stress among older adults*, "Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences" 1997, 52B, pp. 284–293; L. Fratiglioni, Hui-Xin Wang, K. Ericsson, M. Maytan, B. Winblad, *Influence of social network on occurrence of dementia: a community-based longitudinal study*, *The Lancet*, Vol. 355, Issue 9212, 15 April 2000, pp. 1315–1319.

⁵¹⁾ J. Liang, J.M. Bennett, N.M. Krause, M. Chang, S. Lin, Y.L. Chuang, S. Wo, *Stress, social relationships, and old age mortality in Taiwan*, "Journal of Clinical Epidemiology" 1999, 52, pp. 983–995; T.E. Seeman, L.F. Berkman, F. Kohout, A. Lacroix, R. Glynn, D. Blazer, *Intercommunity variations in the association between social ties and mortality in the elderly*, "Annals of Epidemiology", 1993, 3, pp. 325–335.

⁵²⁾ A. Baumann, B. Filipiak, J. Stieber, H. Löwel, *Family status and social integration as predictors of mortality: a 5-year follow-up study of 55- to 74-year-old men and women in the Augsburg area*, "Gerontol Geriatr". 1998 Jun; 31(3), pp. 184–192.

of 2,575 inhabitants of rural areas aged 65–102⁵³⁾. A summary measure of social ties including information about the marital status, number of close friends and relatives, participation in religious practices and membership in groups was constructed. It was confirmed that a low number of social ties is connected with an increase of mortality rate among men as well as women, with the level of social changes presenting the tendency to increase not being related to higher mortality. It was emphasised that continuation of social isolation may constitute a variable more important in relation to the risk of death than the ongoing changes in social ties.

In the research on the study sample of 28,369 American men aged 42–77 that lasted 10 years⁵⁴⁾, it was proven that mortality related to accidents and suicides as well as non-oncologic and non-cardiovascular diseases increased substantially among the men with fewer social ties. Furthermore, the socially isolated men had a greater risk of fatal ischemic heart disease, with the increase in the number of friends related to a major (29%) drop in the mortality rate.

It has also been proven that seniors' satisfaction with available social support is connected with an improvement in the perception of their own health⁵⁵⁾.

The results of nationwide research in Poland indicate that senior citizens of this country may count first and foremost on the help of their close families (67%) and that of their neighbours (28%). Friends and acquaintances provide support for people of advanced age much less frequently, which may be related to the fact they themselves need help and constitute an increasingly smaller group. However, it needs to be emphasised that seldom does the help come from centres and agencies⁵⁶⁾. It should also be emphasised that 5% of the seniors receive no support whatsoever⁵⁷⁾.

Attention is also drawn to the problem of the insufficient system of support for individuals taking care of seniors. According to the Eurofamcare report⁵⁸⁾ a complete support system should include, among others, the following elements – training and information, mentoring and counselling, analysis of the needs, financial support, help in organising professional activities and the responsibilities related to care, providing opportunities to take breaks in the care to rest as well as psychological support.

In relation to the forms of help provided for seniors they are first and foremost⁵⁹⁾ help in running the household (74%), attending to many important affairs (doctors, offices)

⁵³⁾ J.R. Cerhan, R.B. Wallace, *Change in social ties and subsequent mortality in rural elders*, "Epidemiology" 1997 Sep; 8(5), pp. 475–481.

⁵⁴⁾ P.M. Engl, E.B. Rimm, G. Fitzmaurice, I. Kawachi, op.cit.

⁵⁵⁾ A.M. White, G.S. Philogene, L. Fine, S. Sinha, *Social Support and Self-Reported Health Status of Older Adults in the United States*, "American Journal of Public Health", October 2009, Vol. 99, Issue 10, pp. 1872–1878.

⁵⁶⁾ B. Wciórka, p. 4.

⁵⁷⁾ Ibid., introduction.

⁵⁸⁾ "Trans-European Survey Report", Eurofamcare 2006, [za:] *Raport o kapitale intelektualnym...*, op.cit., p. 132.

⁵⁹⁾ B. Wciórka, op.cit., pp. 5–6.

(69%), accompanying in various situations (68%), taking care during illness (61%), and providing advice on crucial matters (61%). The number of those helping seniors with personal hygiene (29%) and providing them with financial support (17%) is much lower.

The research results are consistent in indicating that the strongest and the most decisive influence on the health and well-being of seniors is the evaluation of the perceived support⁶⁰.

Furthermore, the anticipated support⁶¹ and negative interaction⁶² have a greater influence on health and the sense of well-being than factors such as received support and the indicators of social rooting. Anticipated support is defined as the belief that those who are perceived as important will receive the necessary help in the future⁶³. Negative interaction, in turn, is related to hostile social situations, characterised by criticism, rejection, rivalry, breaching the limits of privacy and lack of empathy⁶⁴. Such issues as ineffective support and insufficiency of support are also within the scope of this construct⁶⁵.

N. Krause suggests that anticipated support may serve to balance the negative influence of stress and constitute a greater source of effectiveness in coping on one's own than the help provided by the members of community⁶⁶.

The research conducted by Echenrode and Wethington⁶⁷ indicates that people most frequently try to solve their own problems themselves. They look for the support of others only when their own sources are ineffective or insufficient⁶⁸. That is why a number of researchers believe that receiving support is a sign of failure of individual effort to cope with a difficult situation⁶⁹.

⁶⁰ F.H. Morris, K. Kaniasty, *Received and perceived social support in times of stress: A test of the social support deterioration deterrence model*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology", 1996, 71, pp. 498–511.

⁶¹ N. Krause, op.cit.; N. Krause, J. Liang & S. Gu, *Financial strain, received support, and anticipated support in the P.R.C.*, "Psychology and Aging", 1998, 13, pp. 58–68.

⁶² J.F. Finch, M.A. Okun, M. Barrera, A.J. Zautra & J.W. Reich, *Positive and negative social ties among older adults: Measurement models and the prediction of psychological distress and well-being*, "American Journal of Community Psychology", 1989, 17, pp. 585–605; M.A. Okun, V.M. Keith, *Effects of positive and negative social exchanges with various sources of depressive in younger and older adults*, "Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences", 1998, 53B, pp. 4–20.

⁶³ E. Wethington & R.C. Kessler, *Perceived support, received support, and adjustment to stressful life events*, "Journal of Health and Social Behavior" 1986, 27, pp. 78–89.

⁶⁴ K.S. Rook, *The negative side of social interaction: Impact on psychological wellbeing*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" 1984, 46, pp. 1097–1108.

⁶⁵ J.C. Coyne, C.B. Wortman & D.R. Lehman, *The other side of support: Emotional overinvolvement and miscarried helping*, [in:] B.H. Gottlieb [red.], *Marshaling social support: Formats, processes, and effects*, CA: Sage, Newbury Park 1988, pp. 305–330.

⁶⁶ N. Krause, op.cit.

⁶⁷ J. Eckenrode, E. Wethington, *The process and outcome of mobilizing social support*, [in:] S. Duck [ed.], *Personal relationships and social support*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage 1990, pp. 83–103.

⁶⁸ E. Wethington & R.C. Kessler, op.cit.

⁶⁹ J. Eckenrode, E. Wethington, op.cit.

Wethington and Kessler prove⁷⁰⁾ that the very awareness that people are ready to provide us with support in the situations that are difficult for us creates a social safety network. It encourages one to take risk and to make attempts at solving one's problems independently. The anticipation of support from others, therefore, increases one's activity, makes it easier to acquire new competences necessary to cope and improves the ones acquired formerly. What is also important is that the experience of a successful confrontation with a difficult situation without the direct help of other people may be crucial in constructing the sense of well-being, because independently completed tasks allow for the increase of self-esteem and self-control⁷¹⁾. Functioning within the network of mutual social relationships that provides one with the sense of safety through ongoing support may imply the sense of hope⁷²⁾. Losing hope is a critical factor, playing a central role in e.g. the aetiology of depressive disorders⁷³⁾.

Providing sensible support for seniors is not exclusively related to giving them direct help, with completing all the tasks for them completely inadvisable. It is important, if not essential, to make the seniors feel that they can always count on our support in difficult situations and that there are people around them who may potentially provide help. In this way we do not limit the activity of seniors; what is more, who provide them with the sense of security and well-being.

To recapitulate, the most important aims of health promotion in relation to seniors are concentrated in the following areas:

- Maintaining and improving general physical agility – gradual introduction of regular physical exercise once a week for 60 minutes or every day for 15 minutes is advised; increasing the rationality of diet – regular meals – at least five hot meals a week, adjusting the size of meals to the needs of the body, paying attention to the freshness of products and the quality of dishes;
- Maintaining or increasing the general psychological state („training of the brain” through constant education and teaching others, reading, solving crosswords, participation the University of the Third Age, etc.);
- Maintaining and improving self-control over health (taking better care of one's own health);
- Maintaining the satisfactory level or improving the standard of life and hygiene;

⁷⁰⁾ E. Wethington & R.C. Kessler, op.cit.

⁷¹⁾ J. Rodin, *Control by any Rother name: definitions, concepts, and processes*, [in:] J. Rodin, C. Schooler, K.W. Schaie [eds.], *Self-directedness: cause and effects through the life course*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum 1990, pp. 1–18.

⁷²⁾ N. Krause, op.cit., p. 275.

⁷³⁾ K.P. Nunn, *Personal helpfulness: a conceptual review of the relevance of the perceived future to psychiatry*, "British Journal of Medical Psychology" 1996, 69, pp. 227–245.

- Fostering the existing social relationships and improving their quality and encouraging the establishing of new social ties (prevention of social isolation, providing social support, actions aimed at preparation for old age and its acceptance, learning to alleviate the difficult issues connected with the process of ageing, changing negative social attitudes towards old age and seniors).

Furthermore, while undertaking actions aimed at seniors one must bear in mind two essential issues. The first one is the prevention of deprivation of seniors. It is, therefore, crucial to take preventive actions related to health problems, low accommodation standard, financial problems, abuse and violence against seniors, etc. The system of care over seniors ought to be adapted to the needs of this social group. The necessity to exchange care in medical centres with care provided at home or in the local communities of seniors is emphasised. Particular significance is attributed to the role of the families of seniors as well as voluntary workers and the third sector, in the broad sense of the term, i.e. non-governmental organisations (associations and foundations). While helping seniors we should support them in being independent and self-reliant as long as possible. That is how we can increase the seniors' self-esteem and their sense of independence.

Furthermore, the actions aimed at seniors ought to be connected with their activation and becoming self-reliant – also in relation to health. Particular emphasis must be put on prolonging the professional and social activity of seniors, voluntary work, creativity and self-help. Activity conditions, therefore, the agility and prowess of an individual – in the physical, psychological, and social context – and determines the quality of life.

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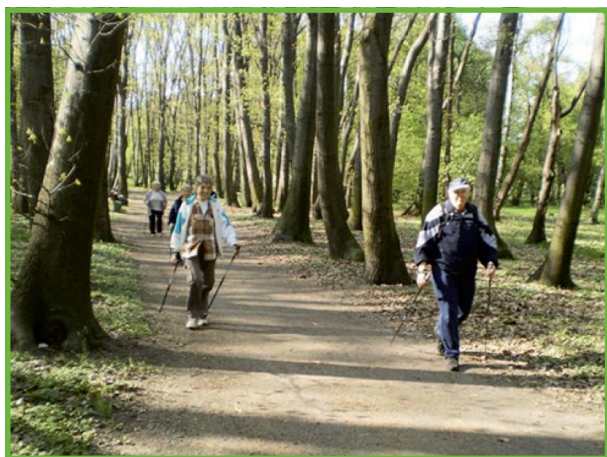
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Health education of seniors – photos



Nordic walking exercise



Health education of seniors – photos

Exercise in the gym



Health education of seniors – photos



Medical examination
before the exercises





PART IV
The project activity for seniors

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European Union opportunities for funding projects for seniors. Review and structure of sources

Summary: The present article is an attempt at organising the available information on the subject of the opportunities of funding projects aimed at people of 50 years of age or more from the sources of various European Union funds at the central, national, and regional levels. Operational programmes related to the opportunities of implementing projects for seniors along with detailed information regarding the

beneficiaries and the potential proponents are presented, as well. Furthermore, a number of regulations and related documents constituting a course of information about the procedures connected with applying for the funds necessary to carry out the planned projects are listed. The aim of the authors of the article was to make it easier to find particular pieces of information related to the opportunities of applying for funds for projects for seniors among the hundreds of publications on the subject.

Key words: projects, operational programme, EU funds, 50+.

Introduction

A developed state should consist of three clearly defined, separate sectors: the public sector – including the government, the local government and other government institutions, the market sector – with the for profit subjects, aimed at generating profit, and the third sector – the voluntary one, including the organisations relying on the principles of self-help, promotion of active living, and aimed at creating and realising grassroots initiatives. Currently, a number of organisations promoting active living among people of over 50 years of age exist - they are usually NGOs. It must be emphasised that being active is to be considered in the context of sport, health, and education. A growing number of initiatives promoting healthy lifestyle and new opportunities of development for people over 50 are being developed in Poland – which does not mean that the level necessary for fulfilling social needs has already been reached. The number of programmes that provide support for seniors who decide to set up businesses, and those that offer employment services and various types of training courses for seniors is growing, as well.

We encounter a number of difficulties on the way to introducing these initiatives, with the question of receiving the necessary funds the most important of them. Therefore, the aim of the present article is to provide a review of the sources of funding and of the information on the projects funded by the European Union as well as the opportunities of receiving financial support for the projects aimed at seniors in Poland. Due to the amplexness of the problem the detailed information related to submitting grant applications has been excluded from the presented data. Because of the fact that the European Union project funding system employs a specific nomenclature it was necessary to provide an ongoing explanation of the used terms – these are listed in brackets.

One of the most important of the current sources of financial contributions to the promotion of active living among the people over 50 years of age are grants from the budget of the European Union. The ways of obtaining funds and their subsequent use depend on the particular persons and organisations applying for the grant. Furthermore, the grants received from the budget of the European Union are the most common source of funding for the aforementioned projects, since initiatives of this sort do not have major support on the level of the national government.

The importance of grant-aid for the initiatives related to the general prevention of social exclusion of seniors is exemplified by the "Report on Intellectual Capital

of Poland” conducted in 2008 that draws the attention of politicians, the public and the media to the role and significance of the quality and the level of the intellectual capital of seniors, with Poland taking the last place of all the 16 European countries included in the comparison.

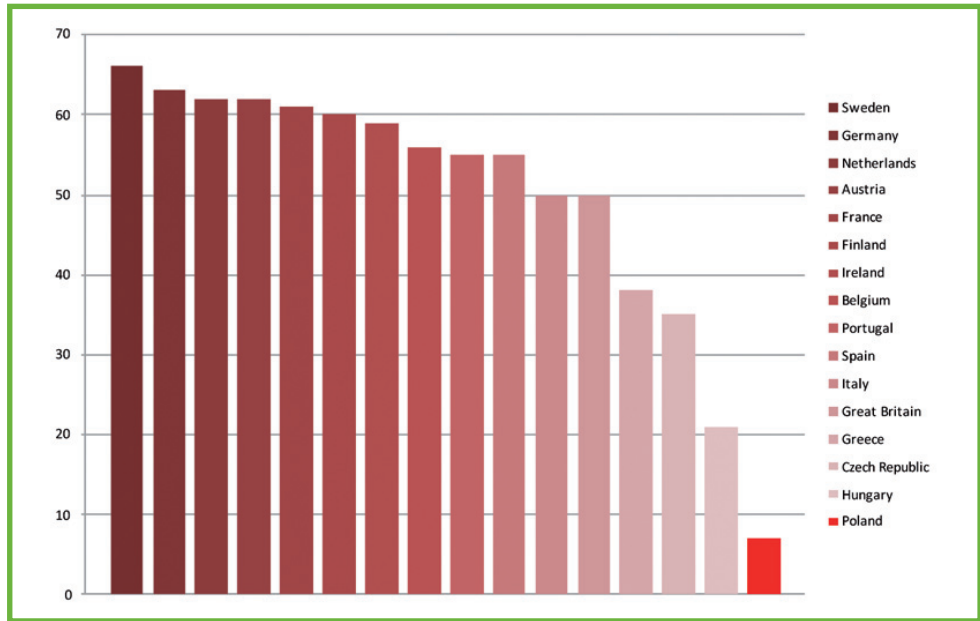


Chart 1. Intellectual Capital Index of seniors

Source: http://pliki.innowacyjnosc.gpw.pl/Kapital_Intelektualny_Polski.pdf, retrieved: 10.06.2010 r.

The reasons for Poland taking such an unfavourable place in the comparison of the researched countries were diagnosed as follows:

- Low level of professional activity of Polish seniors,
- High level of perceived alienation among people of advanced age,
- Low level of the availability of medical services calculated as the number of doctors per 1000 citizens.

This is increasingly becoming a burning issue due to the fact that Polish society is ageing. That is why the government policy related to seniors needs to be changed. Unfortunately, our government that should take sufficient care of seniors and guarantee their rights in accordance with the European Social Charter does not fulfil its duty, and as a consequence the responsibility of providing care and organising the time of people of advanced age lies with the families. It has only been for the last few years that we have been observing a slight change in relation to the aforementioned responsibilities with non-governmental organisations relieving the families of some of them. According to the "Report on Intellectual Capital

of Poland” that we have referred to before the deepening of the unfavourable demographic processes may, in the long run, result in the collapse of the public finances and in the inability of the government to provide social security for the older generations. The crisis of demographic regression can be avoided through the promotion of professional activity among the senior generation and the prolonging of the period of professional activity¹⁾. Operational programmes funded by the European Union are to constitute one of the number of solutions to the problem. That is why in the present article we have decided to emphasise this particular source of funding along with providing an outline of the origins of the discussed grants.

The hitherto received funds can be divided into three stages. Poland benefitted from European Union funds even before 2004 as part of the pre-accession support for the countries working towards European Union membership. Subsequently – after the accession of Poland to the European Union in 2004 – in 2004–2006 we were granted the opportunity to benefit from European Union funding on the same basis as the other members. The years 2007–2013, in turn, constitute a new period for European Union programmes, with Poland receiving further grants for operational programmes of numerous types.

There is a number of rules governing the European Union grant-aid, and one of the most important of them is the obligatory partial funding from the national government; that is, the grant-aid for a project consists of funds from the European Union as well as those from the national budget. The distribution of the financing of programmes in 2004–2006, as well as the current one, according to the plan for 2007–2013 are presented in the diagram below. Such co-financing is also in accordance with one of the rules of the cohesion policy, the one termed

Chart 2. European Union funds

Funds	2004–2006	2007–2013
(100%)	European Union funds (75%)	European Union funds (85%)
	national funds (25%)	national funds (15%)

Source: <http://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/WstepDoFunduszyEuropejskich/Strony/Czysafundusze.aspx>, retrieved: 09.11.2010 r.

¹⁾ http://pliki.innowacyjnosc.gpw.pl/Kapital_Intelektualny_Polski.pdf, dostęp: 10.06.2010 r.

supplementation of the rule of co-financing. It is to provide support and supplementation of the national funds, rather than substituting them completely.

Persons as well as organisations and institutions of various types (entrepreneurs, local government, schools, non-governmental organisations, etc.) may receive the funding depending on the goals that they want to achieve. However, individuals can also benefit from the funding by taking part in the numerous types of training courses, conferences, research projects, and counselling on the subject of starting a business, for instance. A number of conditions should be met before participating, e.g. one may qualify because of one's age, or belonging to a particular social group (especially ones at risk of social exclusion). The recipients – despite the literal meaning of the term – have to accept a number of responsibilities related to, for instance, obligatory participation in classes and successfully finishing the training course on pain of having to return the funding, receiving a certificate. Enumerations of the obligations of the beneficiaries constitute an essential part of the statutes of the particular EU-financed projects, and the final and mutually binding condition in the signing of a contract defining all the requirements that have to be met in order to participate in a EU project, the responsibilities of the organiser as well as the participant of the project, and the consequences of breaching the contract.

In order to receive funding the other organisations and institutions need to submit grant applications. To become the recipients of such funding it is obligatory to meet a number of strict requirements. It is of crucial importance that the statutory aims of an organisation comply with the conditions of application. Beneficiaries can apply for all types of funding, although the project that is to be implemented must comply with the aims a particular operational programme and it must be submitted in response to a call of proposals to the appropriate intermediary body. An application submitted correctly to the appropriate agency is subsequently subject to assessment. During the verification a meeting of experts of an Evaluation Committee is called; then the application is either accepted and the project receives the grant, or it is rejected which results in declining the fund application. The beneficiaries whose projects are rejected can file complaints. In such cases the application is re-assessed by a new team of experts at another Evaluation Committee meeting and then it is finally opinionated.

The assessment of the applications consists of two parts – evaluation of the formal and the quality aspects. The first part is related to the procedural criteria and in the second one the budget of the project – eligible expenditures, reasonability of the planned expenses, as well as the general idea behind the project – is subject to assessment; coherence with the aims of the operational project that the action is to constitute a part of is of crucial importance at this stage. Frequently missing a single rubric in the form causes the rejection of the application due to a formal error, and the quality aspect of the application is not even taken into consideration.

Programmes implemented on the national level

Operational programmes organised as part of the actions undertaken by the European Union in order to support economic growth and employment development are closely connected to the documents, strategies, policies, and guidelines described below.

One of the above is the National Cohesion Strategy (NCS) also referred to as National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). In the document the priorities, the areas of use, and the implementation system of the following EU funds are defined:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF),
- European Social Fund (ESF),
- Cohesion Fund.

The NCS is defined through the strategic and the horizontal objectives. The strategic objective of the NCS is "to create conditions for the improvement of competitiveness of the economy based on knowledge and entrepreneurship, ensuring the increase of employment and the higher level of social, economic cohesion"²⁾. The objective is achieved through the implementation of horizontal objectives, such as:

- "Improving the functioning standard of public institutions and development of partnership mechanisms,
- Improving the human capital quality and enhancing social cohesion,
- Establishment and modernisation of technical and social infrastructure crucial for better competitiveness of Poland,
- Improving the competitiveness and innovativeness of enterprises, including in particular the manufacturing sector with high added value and development of the services sector,
- Increase of the competitiveness of Polish regions and preventing their social, economic and territorial marginalisation,
- Balancing growth opportunities and supporting structural changes on rural areas"³⁾.

The NCS objectives listed above are implemented in a variety of ways – through actions of legal and fiscal character as well as through the operational programmes organised by the European Union and coordinated by the Ministry of Regional Development and the Regional Operational Programmes managed by the executive branches (the managing boards) of the particular voivodships and with the use of projects co-financed by structural elements, such as:

- Infrastructure and Environment Programme – ERDF and CF,
- Innovative Economy Programme – ERDF,
- Human Capital Programme – ESF,

²⁾ <http://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/WstepDoFunduszyEuropejskich/Strony/NSS.aspx>, dostęp: 10.09.2010 r.

³⁾ <http://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/WstepDoFunduszyEuropejskich/Strony/NSS.aspx>, dostęp: 10.09.2010 r.

- 16 regional programmes – ERDF,
- Development of Eastern Poland Programme – ERDF,
- Technical Assistance Programme – ERDF,
- European Territorial Co-operation Programmes – ERDF.

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) - structural funds and the Cohesion Fund constitute the financial tools of the cohesion policy implemented by the European Union. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is the largest of the three and its aim is to increase the level of social and economic cohesion within the European Union and reduction of inequalities between regions.

The ERDF finances:

- Direct support of investments in business in order to foster stable employment,
- Infrastructure connected with research and innovation, telecommunication, preservation of environment, energy, and transport,
- Financial instruments (risk capital funds, regional development funds) in order to support local and regional development and improving the cooperation between cities and regions,
- Technical support tools⁴⁾.

As previously mentioned, the ERDF also finances all the operational programmes.

The second largest element is the European Social Fund (ESF) whose aim is improving the quality and availability of jobs as well as creating opportunities of employment within the European Union. Training courses, workshops, and various forms of employment support constitute the largest part of the projects implemented with the support of the ESF.

The idea of an ongoing adaptation of employees and businesses through participation in lifelong learning systems as well as development and dissemination of innovation in organisation of work constitute the areas of activity of the ESF. Further, the ESF deals with providing access to employment for those looking for work, professionally inactive people, women, and immigrants as well as those with various problems and those discriminated on the labour market. The last element constituting an area of the activity of the ESF is providing support for the human capital through the introduction of education system reforms and establishing education centres.

The last element of the cohesion policy of the European Union is the aforementioned Cohesion Fund that needs to be discussed despite the fact that it is not directly connected with the promotion of active living among the people of over 50 years of age. However, it was as part of that fund supporting ecology and transport that Poland, after its accession into the European Union, received the highest grant-aid that any member state had ever previously obtained. The regional

⁴⁾ <http://www.bps.uw.edu.pl/europejski-fundusz-rozwoju-regionalnego.html>, dostęp: 10.09.2010 r.

government units of the states whose gross national product (GNP) per capita is lower than 90% of the European Union members' average are the main beneficiaries of the discussed funds.

The most important documents regulating the distribution of European Union funds are Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) and the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). The former of these constitute an important document defining the areas that need to be the recipients of funds, which also becomes the basis of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF), also referred to, as formerly mentioned, as the National Cohesion Strategy (NCS), that constitute the most important Polish document related to European Union grant-aid. It is in these documents that the aims that the money received by Poland as part of the aforementioned funds is to be spent on are defined. „The objective of NCS is to create conditions for the improvement of competitiveness of the economy based on knowledge and entrepreneurship, ensuring the increase of employment and the higher level of social, economic cohesion”⁵⁾.

The documents discussed above constitute the basis for the development of Operational Programmes that allow for the receiving of funds for particular actions. Therefore, operational programmes become the instruments created for the implementation of the aims of the ERDF, the ESF, and the CF.

Detailed descriptions of priorities are prepared for each of the programmes, with application documents prepared before submitting all project proposals as well as the acts regulating e.g. the legal aspects of receiving public funds supplementing the descriptions.

Apart from the six main Operational Programmes there are the six regional ones constituting the supplement of the strategic documents of the European Union and involving the particular voivodships.

The forms of financing of all the actions conducted by the European Union described above are implemented at the national as well as the regional levels. However, there is a number of funds distributed at the European Union level that are organised as part of the programmes implemented by the European Commission. All organisations based in the member states as well as those from outside the EU may apply for grant-aid from these funds. The funds at the European Union level are implemented and governed by the European Commission and those institutions in the member states which have been established to manage these forms of financing.

⁵⁾ <http://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/wstepdofunduszyeuropejskich/strony/celepolitykispojnosci.aspx>, dostęp: 10.09.2010 r.

The programmes implemented at the European Union level

The following programmes are implemented at the European Union level:

- Lifelong learning,
- Erasmus Mundus,
- Culture,
- Europe for citizens,
- Media,
- Second programme of Community action in the field of health,
- Safer Internet,
- Youth in action,
- Community programme for employment and solidarity - Progress,
- Life+,
- Freedom, security, and justice programmes,
- External policy instruments,
- Cohesion policy, Common Agricultural Policy, and Common Fisheries Policy instruments.

Description of the programmes for seniors

The precursors of the Lifelong Learning Programme were the SOCRATES, Leonardo da Vinci, Jean Monnet, e-Learning, and European Language Label programmes, with their most important actions included in the Lifelong Learning Programme for 2007–2013. Its aim is „to foster interchange, co-operation and mobility between education and training institutions and systems within the EU” and the expected results are „modernisation and adaptation of education and training systems In the participating countries [...] and [bringing] European added value directly to individual citizens participating in its mobility and other co-operation actions”⁶⁾.

Chart 3. The structure of the Lifelong Learning Programme

Programy sektorowe			
Comenius Edukacja szkolna	Erasmus Szkolnictwo wyższe	Leonardo da Vinci Kształcenie i szkolenie zawodowe	Grundtvig Edukacja dorosłych*
Program Międzysektorowy (Transversal Programme) 4 kluczowe działania – rozwój polityki edukacyjnej; uczenie się języków; ICT upowszechnienie przykładów najlepszej praktyki			
Program Jean Monnet 3 kluczowe działania – Akcja Jean Monnet; instytucje europejskie; stowarzyszenia europejskie			

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc78_en.htm retrieved: 03.02.2012.

⁶⁾ <http://www.frse.org.pl/programy-frse/uczenie-sie-przez-cale-zycie>, dostęp: 15.08.2010 r.

Students, teachers, organisers of training courses, businesses, social partners, associations, research centres, and other organisations concerned with education in the broad sense of the term can become beneficiaries of the Lifelong Learning Programme. It ought to be noted that the lifelong Learning programme is financed in 75% from the European Union funds, with the remaining 25% contributed by the grant recipients.

The programme that is aimed at adult education in the broad sense of the term and that provides support for European cooperation in this area is Grundtvig, whose actions are intended for organisations involved in the education of the final beneficiaries of the programme. It is engaged in promotion of the education of those needing special support; i.e. the handicapped, seniors, national and ethnic minorities, people of low qualifications as well as inhabitants of areas of low adult education accessibility⁷⁾.

Chart 4. The Grundtvig programme

Objectives	<p>„To respond to the educational challenge of an ageing population in Europe, To help provide adults with pathways to improving their knowledge and competences, To improve the quality and accessibility of mobility throughout Europe of people involved in adult education and to increase its volume, To improve the quality and to increase the volume of co-operation between organisations involved in adult education throughout Europe, To assist people from vulnerable social groups and in marginal social contexts, in particular older people and those who have left education without basic qualifications, in order to give them alternative opportunities to access adult education, To facilitate the development of innovative practices in adult education and their transfer, including from a participating country to others, To support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning, To improve pedagogical approaches and the management of adult education organisations⁸⁾.”</p>
Actions	<p>Decentralised: Managed at the national level by National Agencies, Opportunities to implement projects or workshops by organisations (Grundtvig partnership programmes, senior volunteering projects, Grundtvig workshops). Individual trips of adult education staff (training and professional development of adult education staff, visits and exchanges of adult education staff, Grundtvig assistantships, Grundtvig preparatory visits). Centralised: Managed directly by the Executive Agency of the European Commission in Brussels, Multilateral projects, Grundtvig networks, Accompanying measures.</p>

⁷⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/education/llp/doc/call09/prior_pl.pdf, retrieved: 15.08.2010 r.

⁸⁾ <http://grundtvig.org.pl/index.php/ida/2/>, retrieved: 11.06.2010 r.

Target public	Learners in adult education, Institutions and organisations providing learning opportunities in adult education, Teachers and other staff of those institutions or organisations, Centres involved in the initial or further training of adult education staff, Associations and representatives of those involved in adult education, including learners' and teachers' associations, Centres providing guidance, counselling and information services relating to any aspect of adult education, Persons and bodies responsible for systems and policies concerning any aspect of adult education at local, regional and national level, Research centres and bodies concerned with adult education issues, Enterprises, Not-for-profit organisations, voluntary bodies, non-governmental organisations, Higher education institutions.
All 27 of the EU member states as well as Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and Croatia can reply to the calls for proposals of the programme.	

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/structure/grundtvig_en.html#4, retrieved: 03.02.2012.

The national and regional level programmes

Human Capital Operational Programme

The policy of promoting activity of people of over 50 years of age as part of the Human Capital Operational Programme is implemented in regional operational programmes. The actions undertaken to support people of over 50 years of age (sometimes over 45 years of age) are included in the priorities, parts/sub-measures, as it were, of the operational programme. These are the priorities VII.3 and IX.5. Furthermore, the actions related to the promotion of activity of people under 64 years of age, i.e. those of the working age are connected with the priorities VI.1.1, VI.2, VII.1.1, VII.2.1. The limited number of the mentioned programmes makes one realise how minute the European Union funds aimed at promotion of active living among seniors are. An outline of the priorities follows.

The aforementioned priorities present the aims that are to be achieved as well as the actions that are to be undertaken to fulfil them. Furthermore, the priorities determine the types of projects that can be financed. Systemic projects are to be found here – the ones related to the financing of public actions implemented in the way defined in separate legal regulations and by the persons specified therein – and call for proposals projects – with the applications submitted in reply to calls for proposals of the Intermediary Bodies on the basis of the Priority Framework of the HCOP. To complement the presentation of the system of financing the HCOP actions it is necessary to introduce the notion of the Managing Authority. It is the institution providing the grant-aid for the implementation of HCOP projects. It is to announce the calls for proposals, conduct the assessments of the applications, establish the Monitoring Committee, sign contracts with the project managers, monitor the implementation of the projects, as well as granting of refunding the expenditures of the project managers. In the Lower Silesian voivodship the institution implementing the VI and VII priorities is Dolnośląski Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy (Lower Silesian voivodship employment agency) and the IX priority is managed by Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Dolnośląskiego (Lower Silesian voivodship marshal office).

Chart 5. Characteristics of priorities

	Priority VI Employment market open to everyone	Priority VII Promotion of social integration			Priority IX Development of education and competences in the regions	
Actions	6.1 Improvement of the accessibility of employment and supporting professional activity in the region	7.1 Development and dissemination of active integration	7.2 Prevention of social exclusion and strengthening the social economy	7.3 Local initiatives for active integration	9.3 Dissemination of continued school education	9.5 Grassroots educational initiatives in rural areas
Aims of the actions	Increasing the level of professional activity and providing opportunities for employment for the unemployed and creating conditions for the development of professional activity in the region	Development of active forms of integration and securing access to them for the people at risk of social exclusion and the improvement of the effectiveness of the functioning of social assistance institutions.	Improvement of the accessibility of employment for people at risk of social exclusion and development of the social economy sector.	Supporting the development of initiatives for the prevention of social exclusion of the members of local communities in the rural areas that encourage their professional and social activation.	Increasing the participation of adults in continued school education through the improvement of its quality and availability and increasing the importance of continued education as a factor influencing the employment market.	Dissemination of activity of the inhabitants of rural areas aimed at self-organisation and creating local initiatives for the development of education and increasing of the level of education of the inhabitants of rural areas.
Sub-measures	6.1.1 Supporting the regional employment market – calls for proposals applications.	7.1.1 Development and promotion of active integration through social assistance centres – systemic projects.	7.1.2 Development and promotion of active integration through regional family support centres – systemic projects.	–	–	–

Types of beneficiaries	All single entities – except regional employment agencies and individuals	Social assistance centres	Family support centres	All single entities – except individuals	All single entities – except individuals	All single entities – except individuals	All single entities – except individuals
Target groups	The unemployed, particularly: – persons unemployed for at least 12 consecutive months during the last 2 years, – women (including especially those entering the employment market for the first time and those returning from maternity leaves) – people under 25 years of age – the disabled – people over 45 years of age – The unemployed inhabitants of rural and rural-city areas and inhabitants of cities of population of under 25,000 intending to find non-agricultural jobs/mieszkańców zamierzające podjąć zatrudnienie w zawodach pozarolniczych.	People meeting all three of the requirements: – benefitting from social assistance. (15–64 years of age) – unemployed or the employed at risk of social exclusion.	People meeting three of the requirements: – benefitting from social assistance. – working age (15–64 years of age) – unemployed or the employed at risk of social exclusion – the environment of the socially excluded	– the unemployed at risk of social exclusion – the environment of the socially excluded – social assistance and integration agencies, their staff and voluntary workers – social and business partners	– the unemployed of working age (15–64 years of age), at risk of social exclusion, inhabiting rural and rural-city areas and cities of population of under 25,000 – inhabitants of rural and rural-city areas and inhabitants of cities of population of under 25,000 – single entities working in rural areas for the prevention of social exclusion of the inhabitants of these areas.	– people of 24-64 years of age (and those of 18-24 years of age who are out of school) who declare the willingness to participate in continued school education – adult education schools, continued education, training, and vocational education centres (except schools for secondary schools graduates) – social and business partners – employers	– inhabitants of rural and rural-city areas and inhabitants of cities of population of under 25,000 – local communities working in the rural areas for the development of education in the rural areas and increasing the level of education of the inhabitants of rural areas – single entities working in the rural areas for the prevention of their marginalisation and their sufficient development.

Source: Developed on the basis of the information on the Ministry of Regional Development website (<http://www.mrr.gov.pl/>) and the Dolnośląski Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy (Lower Silesian voivodship employment agency) website (<http://www.dwup.pl/>).

Chart 6. The documents necessary for writing a Human Capital Operational Programme project

Documents	
1	<p>European Union regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corrigendum to Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 - Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999 - Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Social Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1784/1999 - Council Regulation (EC) No 1084/2006 of 11 July 2006 establishing a Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1164/94 - Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC) - Corrigendum to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of 8 December 2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and of Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Regional Development Fund
2	<p>Polish regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ustawa z dnia 7 listopada 2008 r. o zmianie niektórych ustaw w związku z wdrażaniem funduszy strukturalnych i Funduszu Spójności (Dz.U. 2008 nr 216 poz. 1370), - Obwieszczenie Marszałka Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 20 listopada 2007 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia jednolitego tekstu ustawy – Prawo zamówień publicznych (Dz.U.07. nr 223, poz. 1655), - Ustawa z dnia 6 grudnia 2006 r. o zasadach prowadzenia polityki rozwoju (Dz.U.06. nr 227, poz. 1658 z późn. zm.), - Ustawa z dnia 8 grudnia 2006 r. o zmianie ustawy o finansach publicznych oraz niektórych innych ustaw (Dz. U. z 2006 r., nr 249 poz. 1832), - Ustawa z dnia 30 czerwca 2005 r. o finansach publicznych (Dz. U. z 2005 r., nr 249, poz. 2104 z późn. zm.), - Zarządzenie Nr 6 Ministra Rozwoju Regionalnego z dnia 11 kwietnia 2007 r. w sprawie Komitetu Koordynacyjnego Narodowe Strategiczne Ramy Odniesienia na lata 2007–2013
3	<p>Directives for 2007–2013</p> <p>EU documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Community Strategic Guidelines (CSG) constitute an essential EU document that defines the areas to be financed by the EU. On the basis of the Guidelines the National Strategic Reference Framework are constructed. <p>Polish documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The National Strategic Reference Framework, also known as the National Cohesion Strategy, is the most important Polish document related to EU funds. It defines the aims for which Poland is to spend the funds of the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund. The National Cohesion Strategy for 2007-2013 is aimed at creating conditions for an increase of competitiveness of Polish industry based on knowledge and entrepreneurship and ensuring an increase in employment and an increase in social, economic, and spatial cohesion. - The purpose of directives, as opposed to regulations that define the aim and the scope of the particular funds, is to identify the areas in which the cohesion policy can be most effective in supporting the implementation of the Community priorities aimed at achieving the goals of the new Lisbon Strategy. <p>The Community Strategic Guidelines constitute the basis for the preparation of national documents of the member states, i.e. National Strategic Reference Frameworks and the operational documents.</p>

4	Directives of the Ministry of Regional Development	Documents regulating the general aspects of inculating the EU funds in the 2007–2013 financial perspective
5	National Development Strategy	
6	Strategia Rozwoju Województwa Dolnośląskiego (Lower Silesian voivodship development strategy)	– Documents defining the aims and the priorities of the social and economic development on the national, regional, and local levels
7	Local Development Strategies	
8	Horizontal directives	
9	Directives for the Human Capital Operational Programme	– Documents of the Ministry of Regional Development that define the rules and aims related to the implementation of the Human Capital Operational Programme, e.g. rules of financing, eligibility of expenditures, financial reporting, control system, etc.
10	The system of implementation of the Human Capital Operational Programme	
11	The Human Capital Operational Programme	– Document including the socio-economic report identifying the particular areas to be supported (i.e. employment, education, adaptability, social integration, administration, and health care), the SWOT analysis, information on the subject of the hitherto received foreign funding for the human capital, the strategy of implementation of the Programme divided into the particular areas to be supported, description of the priorities, the expected effects of the support and implementation indicators, description of the system of implementation, information about and the scope of complementarity with other funds and operational programmes and the financial plan. Due to the general character of the Human Capital Operational Programme the Managing Authority has prepared.
12	Detailed description of priorities	– Document providing further details on the directives of the Human Capital Operational Programme. It is a compendium for the potential beneficiaries of the Programme containing information about the opportunities and the ways of implementing the projects co-financed by the European Social Fund. The information contained therein is related to the particular types, the list of the potential beneficiaries, the target groups, and the system of implementation, making it easier to prepare the project and to fill the application forms correctly.
13	Action plans for the particular priorities for each year of the 2007-2013 period.	– Document developed by the Intermediary Body – the yearly implementation plan of the Human Capital Operational Programme – the plans prepared separately for each of the regional priorities include: the report on the dominant problems, the planned aims to be achieved as a result of the support provided and information on the preferred forms of support in a particular year, financial plans for each of the years and the detailed rules and the deadlines for the choice of the projects in the span of one budget year (except for the action plan for 2007–2008). The document is recommended by the Monitoring Committee of the Human Capital Operational Programme and assented by the Managing Authority of the Programme.
14	Calls for proposals	– Document including information on the call for proposals: its subject, application submission deadlines, the funds for the financing of the project, the application requirements, selection criteria.
15	The application	– Document submitted by the potential beneficiary/project organiser to the implementing agency in order to receive funds.

Source: Developed on the basis of the information on the Ministry of Regional Development website (<http://www.mrr.gov.pl>) and the Dolnośląski Wojewódzki Urząd Pracy (Lower Silesian voivodship employment agency) website (<http://www.dwup.pl>).

To conclude it needs to be stated that although the European Commission proposes certain actions supporting the initiatives aimed at seniors they might not be sufficient in the face of the growing problem presented by the ageing of the society. The results of the analysis of the opportunities of support for people over 50 years of age provided by the European Union suggest that there are only a few such programmes. The inability to use the EU funds as well as the ineffective management of them constitute yet another problem. Although one hears more and more about computer training courses for seniors or sport and cultural actions there is no effective promotion and education campaign related to the subject of activity and promotion of active living among people of over 50 years of age. Because of this situation a large part of the society remains ignorant of the existence of such programmes, which is why the co-financed projects frequently have problems reaching the indicators to be met according to the application.

Without social interest in the problem and with the lack of knowledge of the opportunities of receiving support the problem of the ageing society is marginalised. Social dialogue is of crucial importance here, because it makes it necessary for the Polish legislators and the European Union officials to negotiate and seek solutions. That is why we should hope that the year 2012 that is to be the Year of Seniors will mark the beginning of essential, necessary changes in this difficult area.

Furthermore, the highly formalised application submission system and the restrictions imposed by the European Union on the potential project organisers are so severe that small centres and agencies cannot „compete” for the project funds due to their lack of sufficient financial security. Because of this situation the funds for a particular priority often are not spent which leads to Poland refunding the European Union financing and the indicators assumed in the operational programmes and plans not being met.

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In 2010 she analysed the aforementioned questions in relation to the @ktywny Senior project, while writing her thesis paper.

In her leisure time she enjoys watching sport. She loves reading and having fun with her friends.

Planning the @ktywny Senior project budget

Summary: The aim of the present article is to introduce the readers to the conclusions that I came to while analysing the budget of the @ktywny Senior project with the use of modern methods and techniques of project management. In the present article I concentrate on the analysis of the budget before the introduction of the instruments connected with its implementation as well as the results of my research. I have also presented the methods of controlling the adherence to the budget of the project with the use of the Earned Value method. To conclude I present propositions of certain changes to the @ktywny Senior project budget that could allow for the future avoiding of the financial difficulties that the authors and organisers of the project had to face previously.

Key words: cost, project management, budget.

Nowadays it is hard to imagine implementing a project without developing a plan. Proper implementation of a project as well as effective management

of the project while it is being carried out may be a source of substantial gain. Even the smallest of investments should be implemented on the basis of project documentation including plans and working drawings, technical calculations and the anticipated cost of the endeavour.

The project cost is what usually provokes strong emotions. One of the most important responsibilities of the project managers is to plan and adhere to the budget. Due to the consequences that customers and organisers may have to face in case of exceeding the budget the financial plan of the project must be developed with utmost care. Budgeting may turn out to be more or less effective depending on the methods and techniques used and the possibilities of receiving information on the costs and means of financing.

The preparation and implementation of such projects as *@ktywny Senior* carried out in Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych (NGOs support centre) Sektor 3 have always appeared to me as interesting. During my university studies I became familiar with the rules of project management¹⁾, which has confirmed my opinions. In the present article I shall try to introduce the results of my research and to employ the methods that I have learned in a particular project. *@ktywny Senior* is a prospective idea because, as we all know, we are an ageing society and such endeavours allow for the activation of seniors and the prevention of social exclusion. The project introduced below partially addresses the issues connected with the solving of certain problems of the old age and the participation in the inventions of modern civilisation which are, among others, computers. Acquiring the skills necessary to use these devices provides people of advanced age with new means of contact with the world and of realising some of their interests.

The aim of the conducted research was to propose instruments to be used and to carry out a control of the *@ktywny Senior* project budget. The research was based on a method²⁾ termed interview.

I have employed the following research techniques³⁾ as part of the method:

- ❖ In-depth interview with the project supervisor,
- ❖ Surveys among the participants of the project,

¹⁾ **Project management** is to be understood as the use of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques during the actions of the project in order to achieve or surpass the needs and expectations of the ordering party. E. Nowak, *Strategiczne zarządzanie kosztami*, Kraków 2006, pp. 209–242.

²⁾ **Research method** is a set of theoretically justified concepts and instruments encompassing the entirety of the researcher's actions aimed at solving a scientific problem. http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metodologia_bada%C5%84_pedagogicznych, dostęp: 05.11.2010 r.

³⁾ **Research techniques** are actions regulated by the directives developed through empirical experience allowing for the receiving of optimally certifiable data.

- ❖ The Earned Value⁴⁾ method employed for the control of the project cost.

Budget of the @ktywny Senior project

The budget presented a list of all the tasks performed throughout the project and the cost thereof (chart 1). While looking at the financial plan of the @ktywny Senior project one may learn of the expenditures that had to be made in order to fulfil each of the tasks. Originally the budget was planned for 200–210 participants – on the basis of the answers received to the invitations to take part – but it was implemented for 60 people. Limiting the number of participants was caused by the lack of financial support from the borough. The following tasks were undertaken as part of the project⁵⁾:

- Medical examination at the start of the training,
- Physical and mental health assessment at the start of the training,
- Computer and internet skills training,
- Physical activity training,
- Andragogical workshops and seminars,
- "Filozofia człowieka" (The philosophy of human beings) workshops,
- Physical and mental health assessment at the end of the training,
- Medical examination at the end of the training,
- Project management,
- Scientific consultation.

During the preparation of the project the sense and practicality of the project were confirmed during the informal talks and meetings with the representatives of the Urząd Miasta (City Office); however, it turned out eventually that no one was willing to risk spending public funds on such an innovative programme, even though these would only constitute 50% of the entire budget⁶⁾. Despite the numerous cuts in the planned costs it was impossible to receive any funding from the borough.

The amounts in the original budget were estimated on the basis of the approximate expenditures on each of the planned actions. All the costs of the teachers' pay were estimated on the basis of their offers and verified according

⁴⁾ **The Earned Value Management** allows for all of the participants of a project (investors, owners and stockholders, sponsors, financial institutions, project managers and the project team, contractors and co-operators) to have a comprehensive control of the implementation of the contract in the substantive, time, and cost aspects. Thanks to the full integration of information on the works carried out, their deadlines, and the expenditures an ongoing analysis of the realisation of the budget can be conducted. (BCWP – budgeted cost of work performed, ACWP – actual cost of work performed, BCWS – budgeted cost of work scheduled). http://www.getmanager.com.pl/narzedzia/earned_value.html, retrieved: 27.12.2009 r.

⁵⁾ Interview conducted with the project supervisor M. Ferenc on 10.03.2010 r.

⁶⁾ Interview conducted with the project supervisor M. Ferenc on 10.03.2010 r.

to the current market standards. The further numbers were established in a similar way. None of the project management methods was employed in the estimation, which is why the calculations were not precise. In the future emphasis must be put on this issue and one of the four methods of cost estimation used⁷⁾:

- I. Bottom-up estimation.
 1. Includes the following elements:
 - a) Breaking the project down into the smallest parts,
 - b) Estimation of the cost of each of the particular elements,
 - c) Summing the costs from the bottom up.
 2. Characteristics of the method:
 - a) Estimation accuracy of about 5%,
 - b) Labour-intensive method, especially in the original estimations,
 - c) Detailed documentation of the analysis can be used for further projects (capitalization of knowledge).
 3. To employ the bottom-up method detailed information on the following is required:
 - a) material resources necessary for the performing of the particular tasks,
 - b) human resources,
 - c) all expenditures (incl. administrative ones).
- II. The top-down method – estimation through analogy:
 1. Estimation on the basis of the actual costs of earlier projects.
 2. If the estimation is based on a „similar” project from the past – the average miscalculation is +/- 15%, in the case of different projects +/- 35%.
 3. A „knowledge bank” about the costs of projects of different types is required (capitalization of knowledge of the implemented projects).
- III. Parametric models:
 1. The estimated cost of the project (sub-project, tasks) is included in an analytical equation.
 2. It is enough to substitute the necessary values (parameters) to the equation.
 3. Example of parameters:
 - a) in construction: e.g. the area, the volume,
 - b) in IT: number of instructions in a source code,
 - c) in any other field: the complexity of the project, innovativeness, the level of knowledge (difficulty) of the customer.
 4. Parametric models require testing on numerous projects.
 5. The verified data is very valuable.
- IV. Expertise:
 1. A single expert may be very wrong (up to 70%), that is why the estimations of numerous experts are averaged.

⁷⁾ www.ioz.pwr.wroc.pl/Pracownicy/Kuchta/dokt-proj1.ppt, dostęp: 11.12.2009 r.

2. To ensure an estimation accuracy of about 15–20% the participation of ca. 70 experts is required (!).
3. The method is expensive⁸⁾.

On the basis of experience the best method may turn out to be the top-down (analogy) one.

Chart 1. Budget of the @ktywny Senior project for 60 people

N.	Cost type – substantive and administrative costs connected with the performing of the tasks	Number of units	Unit cost (in PLN)	Type of measurement	Total cost (in PLN)
1.	Medical examination at the start of the training	60	80	Number of examinations	4800
2.	Physical and mental health assessment at the start of the training	60	50	Number of examinations	3000
3.	Computer and internet skills training instructors' pay	180	50	hours	9000
4.	Physical activity training instructors pay	180	25	hours	4500
5.	Andragogical workshops and seminars costs	12	100	hours	1200
6.	"Filozofia człowieka" (The philosophy of human beings) workshops costs	12	70	hours	840
7.	Physiotherapy examination at the end of the training	60	80	Number of examinations	3000
8.	Medical examination at the end of the training	15	320	hours	4800
9.	Project management costs	2	2500	months	5000
10.	Scientific consultations	0	0	hours	0
	TOTAL				36140

Source: Interview conducted with the project supervisor M. Ferenc on 10.03.2010.

Realisation of the budget of the @ktywny Senior project

While conducting the analysis of the budget of the @ktywny Senior project I have noticed certain differences between the cost calculation methods. The actual budget is higher by 965 PLN than the original one, so the amount that needs to be invested in 37,105 PLN. However, some of the costs are lower the original ones. The differences result from the discrepancies between the rates of pay that were not taken into account in the original budget estimation and the detailed costs of the use of the rooms and the costs that were taken into account in chart 2 in the actual cost column.

⁸⁾ www.ioz.pwr.wroc.pl/Pracownicy/Kuchta/dokt-proj1.ppt, dostęp: 11.12.2009 r.

Chart 2. Actual budget of the @ktywny Senior project

N.	Cost type – substantive and administrative costs connected with the performing of the tasks	Number of units	Unit cost (in PLN)	Type of measurement	Actual cost (in PLN)
1.	Medical examination at the start of the training	62	50	Number of examinations	3100
2.	Physical and mental health assessment at the start of the training	62	111	Number of examinations	6882
3.	Computer and internet skills training instructors' pay	180	50	hours	9000
4.	Physical activity training instructors pay	72	79	hours	5688
5.	Andragogical workshops and seminars costs $(24*75+8*120)/32(\text{persons})^9$	32	87	hours	2784
6.	"Filozofia człowieka" (The philosophy of human beings) workshops costs	30	120	hours	3600
7.	Physiotherapy examination at the end of the training	0	0	hours	0
8.	Medical examination at the end of the training	57	43	Number of examinations	2451
9.	Project management costs	2	1800	months	3600
10.	Scientific consultations	0	0	hours	0
TOTAL					37105

Source: Interview conducted with the project supervisor M. Ferenc on 10.03.2010.

Since the project received no financial support from the borough the people conducting the examinations and the trainings declared that all the tasks performed as part of this pilot project would be carried out without pay, because the costs of the necessary support were related first and foremost to this part of the budget¹⁰.

Monitoring and control of the costs of the @ktywny Senior project

In project management controlling the costs of the implementation is just as important as respecting the dates of payment and the technical requirements¹¹.

Control of the costs is connected with supervision of the changes. It consists in the monitoring of the implemented costs, detecting departures from the plan,

⁹) Cost of the andragogical workshops and seminars – the calculation: sum of the product of the multiplication of the hours, the cost of the examination by the value of the examination divided by the number of people.

¹⁰) Interview conducted with the project supervisor M. Ferenc on 10.03.2010.

¹¹) H. Brandenburg, *Zarządzanie projektami*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej, Katowice 2002, pp. 189–222.

ensuring that the changes are applied correctly, preventing incorrect changes, and informing. In other words, it consists in constantly asking "why?"¹²⁾. It must be conducted throughout the entire duration of the project in order to make it possible to react immediately to the results of a lack of funds. During the realisation of the @ktywny Senior project no such control was carried out. Such situation should never take place in the future.

In connection with my reflections based on the received documents and the balances of the costs paid by the Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych Sektor 3 I planned such control for 26.03.2009 with the use of the Earned Value method. Project management with the use of this method allows for all of the participants of a project (investors, owners and stockholders, sponsors, financial institutions, project managers and the project team, contractors and co-operators) to have a comprehensive control of the implementation of the contract in the substantive, time, and cost aspects. Thanks to the full integration of information on the works carried out, their deadlines, and the expenditures an ongoing analysis of the realisation of the budget can be conducted. (BCWP – budgeted cost of work performed, ACWP – actual cost of work performed, BCWS – budgeted cost of work scheduled) and the amount and the causes of departures can be identified objectively and in detail¹³⁾.

In the Earned Value method realised on the basis of both of the parameters (budgeted cost and actual cost) is constructed with the use of a third variable, as well, the latter being a combination of the two former ones. Therefore, the method consists in three parameters:

- 1) The budgeted cost of work scheduled (BCWS), determined before the start of the implementation of the project and forming a plan of project expenditures (it is the amount of funds that that we want to dedicate to the realisation of the project),
- 2) The actual cost of work performed (ACWP) which one learns of only during the carrying out of the particular project tasks and it constitutes the costs actually spent on the implementation of the project. If all works are conducted on schedule the actual cost of work performed is equal to the budgeted cost of work scheduled. Seldom does this happen, however, and the actual costs are usually higher than the budgeted costs, which is typical especially of highly innovative endeavours,
- 3) The budgeted cost of work performed (BCWP) which one learns of during the realisation of the project is constructed through a comparison of the budgeted cost with the work performed; it constitutes, therefore, a combination of the two formerly discussed parameters and forms the actual cost of the work performed.

¹²⁾ <http://www.skutecznyprojekt.pl/artykul.htm?AID=100>, retrieved: 11.12.2009 r.

¹³⁾ http://www.getmanager.com.pl/narzedzia/earned_value.html, retrieved: 27.12.2009 r.

The three parameters are presented in the form of the curves in the diagram below; their analysis allow for an easy determination of departures from the budget and the schedule (Diagram 1).

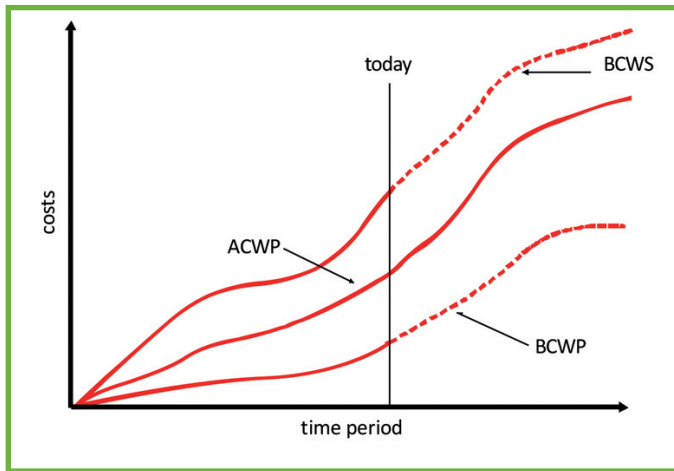


Diagram 1. A presentation of the Earned Value method

Source: E. Nowak, *Strategiczne zarządzanie kosztami*, Kraków 2006, p. 233.

Departures from the implementation of the planned budget are divided into the variance caused by falling behind schedule (SV – schedule variance) and variance from the budgeted costs (CV – cost variance). The results of these variances allow for an ongoing evaluation of effectiveness at all stages of the project and provide an opportunity to finish the project on schedule and within the planned scope and the agreed budget¹⁴⁾.

In the @ktywny Senior project the progress of tasks is measured in hours. The modified project and the budget are presented in chart 3, and in chart 4 the implementation of the project (the planned and the actual ones) is presented. Modification of the project in order to make it possible the conduct the control does not include the medical examinations at the start and at the end nor does it include the cost of project management, because these were measured with number of examinations and the number of months respectively. All the other costs were measured in hours and they are included in the control on the basis of the plan of actions of the @ktywny Senior project.

¹⁴⁾ http://www.getmanager.com.pl/narzedzia/earned_value.html, retrieved:27.12.2009 r.

Chart 3. The modified budget of the @ktywny Senior project

Action	Planned duration (h)	Planned cost per hour	Budget
Computer and internet skills training instructors' pay	180	50	9000
Physical activity training instructors' pay	180	25	4500
Andragogical workshops and seminars costs	12	100	1200
"Filozofia człowieka" (The philosophy of human beings) workshops costs	12	70	840
Project			15540

Source: Developed on the basis of the non-governmental organisations project @ktywny Senior.

Chart 4. Implementation of the project (planned and actual)

Action	Planned implementation in hrs.				Actual cost per hour	Actual implementation in hrs.			
	06.03.09	13.03.09	20.03.09	27.03.09		06.03.09	13.03.09	20.03.09	27.03.09
Computer and internet skills training instructors' pay	12	42	72	92	50	12	42	72	92
Physical activity training instructors' pay	8	27	36	36	79	8	27	36	36
Andragogical workshops and seminars costs	3	6	24	27	87	3	6	24	27
„Filozofia człowieka" (The philosophy of human beings) workshops costs	0	24	24	48	120	0	24	24	48

Source: Developed on the basis of the @ktywny Senior project.

In the basis of the data correlated in the charts calculations can be made, which are presented below in chart 5, related to the budget control. The EAC – estimate at completion – method is employed.

Chart 5. Budget control¹⁵⁾

27.03. 2009	Planned budget	Modifi- cations	BAC								
	15540			15540	Measure of budget implementation			Costs variance and its cause			Evaluation at the end of the project
Action	BCWS	BCWP	ACWP	BCWS – ACWP	CV = BCWP – ACWP	SV = BCWP – BCWS	BAC	ETC	EAC = ACWP + ETC	VAC = BAC – EAC	
Computer and internet skills training instructors' pay	4600	4600	4600	0	0	0	9000	0	4600	4400	
Physical activity training instructors' pay	900	900	2844	–1944	–1944	0	4500	0	2844	1656	
Andragogical workshops and seminars costs	2700	2700	2349	351	351	0	1200	0	2349	–1149	
"Filozofia człowieka" (The philosophy of human beings) workshops costs	3360	3360	5760	–2400	–2400	0	840	0	5760	–4920	
Total cost	11560	11560	15553	–3993	–3993	0	15540	0	15553	–13	

Source: Developed on the basis of the @ktywny Senior project.

The calculations made are to help in finding the answers to the following questions:

1. Is the project implementation cheaper or more expensive than planned?
2. Is the work performed greater or smaller than planned?
3. Were there any payment problems as of 27.03.2009?
4. Does the project adhere to the budget?

On the basis of the chart a conclusion may be drawn that the project is on schedule (no departure from the plan), but it is more expensive than planned

¹⁵⁾ Chart legend: BCWP – budgeted cost of work performed, ACWP – actual cost of work performed, BCWS – budgeted cost of work scheduled, BCWS – ACWP – the difference between the budgeted cost of work performed and the actual cost of work performed, CV – cost variance, SV – schedule variance, BAC – budget at completion, ETC – estimated total cost, EAC – estimate at completion, VAC – variance of actual cost.

(CV = -3993). The organisers of the project would spend more than the funds estimated as of the day of the control – the variance presented above reached -3993. If money was to still be spent in such a way by the time of the end of the project the budget would have been exceeded by 13%. The variance of actual cost exceeds (-13) the project budget. The planned percentage of realisation as of the day of the control was $11560/15540 = 74\%$. The actual percentage of implementation was unchanged¹⁶⁾.

Estimation of the realisation of the particular tasks leads to the conclusion that the actions such as:

1. Physical training and education (exercise),
2. „Filozofia człowieka” (The philosophy of human beings) workshops, were more expensive than planned.

Chart 6 below presents the values of the scheduled, performed, and actual work in the particular stages of the project. Diagram 2, in turn, presents the earned Value method curves, i.e. it constitutes the presentation of the control conducted with the use of this method.

Chart 6. The scheduled, performed, and actual work in the particular stages of control

	06.03.09	13.03.09	20.03.09	27.03.09
Computer and internet skills training instructors' pay	600	2100	3600	4600
Physical activity training instructors pay	632	2133	2844	2844
Andragogical workshops and seminars costs	261	522	2088	2349
„Filozofia człowieka” (The philosophy of human beings) workshops costs	0	2880	2880	5760
Actual (ACWP)	1493	7635	11412	15553
Computer and internet skills training instructors' pay	600	2100	3600	4600
Physical activity training instructors' pay	200	675	900	900
Andragogical workshops and seminars costs	300	600	2400	2700
„Filozofia człowieka” (The philosophy of human beings) workshops costs	0	1680	1680	3360
Scheduled (BCWS)	1100	5055	8580	11560
Computer and internet skills training instructors' pay	600	2100	3600	4600
Physical activity training instructors pay	200	675	900	900
Andragogical workshops and seminars costs	300	600	2400	2700
„Filozofia człowieka” (The philosophy of human beings) workshops costs	0	1680	1680	3360
Performed (BCWP)	1100	5055	8580	11560

Source: Developed on the basis of the @ktywny Senior project.

As it was mentioned before, the necessary co-financing was related first and foremost to the project instructors' pay; however, since the borough refused to provide

¹⁶⁾ Interview conducted with the project supervisor M. Ferenc on 10.03.2010.

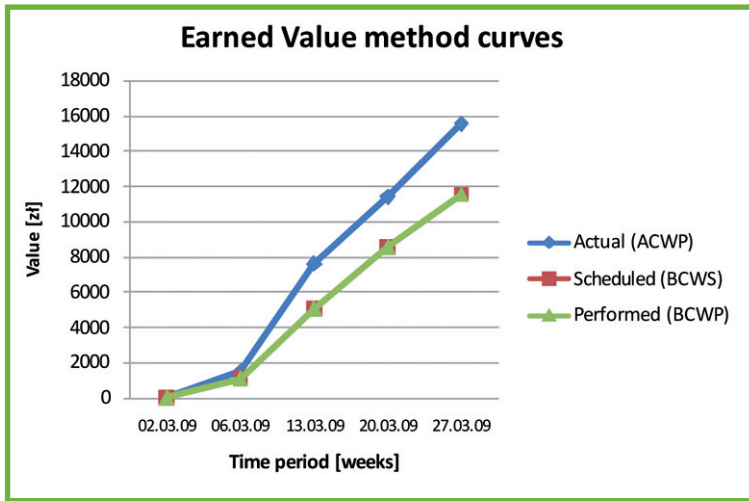


Diagram 2. Earned Value method curves

Source: Developed on the basis of the @ktywny Senior project.

any financial support these people worked for free¹⁷⁾. That is why the control described above was of a prognostic character proposed by me for the remaining part of the project.

Propositions of changes and improvements of the budget

The @ktywny Senior project generated a lot of interest of the beneficiaries as well as the organisers; that is why it was decided to organize the activity once again. To improve the project the conclusions and suggestions resulting from the research conducted and described above should be taken into account. In the light of the presented reflections it must be stated that the budget of the project was planned correctly. The lack of financial support from the borough turned out to be the greatest disadvantage – it was the reason that the budget cuts had to be made – and the lack of budget control throughout the duration of the project was another one. In the future the project ought to be managed in such a way as to avoid similar problems. The results of the survey research carried out at the end of the first edition of the @ktywny Senior project by the organisers of the endeavour might prove helpful. They were aimed at determining the usefulness of the project in the target social group as well as its faults. The opinion of the seniors themselves constituted a crucial element, who stated that, for instance, it would have been better for them if the classes took place 4 times a week with an additional day off, and not

¹⁷⁾ Interview conducted with the project supervisor M. Ferenc on 10.03.2010.

– as it was organised formerly – 5 times a week. Every day the classes started at 9.00 and lasted until 3.00, with the beneficiaries participating in one 3-hours-long block¹⁸⁾. Shortening the duration is justified by the fact that seniors get tired more quickly, and an additional day of would allow them to regenerate, which would let their effort be more fruitful and the time devoted to learning to be managed in a more effective way.

In connection with this it should be considered if organising the classes 4 times a week, e.g. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, with Wednesdays put away for relaxing or perhaps social events and recreation such as games, meeting for tea or coffee, or organising dances would not be a better solution. Because of the limiting of the number of the class days each of the beneficiaries would participate in an 3,5-hours-long block instead of the hitherto 3-hours-long one. The classes of each beneficiary would be 45 minutes longer every day. The general class time would remain unchanged and it would last from 9.00 to 3.00.

Furthermore, introducing classes on employment law an running one's own business which the beneficiaries could potentially start could be of great value.

Cooperation with businesses and institutions organising active recreation is planned in order to prepare trips on Saturdays, Sundays, and the free Wednesdays – with partial payment from the participants – to introduce various forms of active recreation. It would be made possible for each of the beneficiaries to participate in 4 hours of employment law and starting one's own business education in cooperation with employment agencies which would provide information and help in this field.

In Chart 7 below the classes that are to be organised as part of the modified project are presented as integrated in an hour structure.

Chart 7. The trainings for each of the beneficiaries in the modified project budget

Computer skills training	30
Physical activities	14
Health and physical activities education	14
Andragogical workshops	12
Andragogical seminars	10
English	4
Media and reading education	4
The conscious consumer	2
Employment law and business	4
TOTAL	94

Source: Developed on the basis of the @ktywny Senior project.

¹⁸⁾ Interview conducted with the project supervisor M. Ferenc on 10.03.2010.

Having carried out an analysis of the entire project I wish to propose a number of changes to the budget:

1. First of all, it seems necessary to send invitations to these people who could not participate in the first edition of this project because of its limited budget, which means having to write invitations to 150 people, because in the previous edition 200 were sent, and 60 benefitted from the participation on the project. Cost of the invitations is 3,41¹⁹⁾.
2. Preparing the aims of the @ktywny Senior project for 60 people 3 months with 2,000 PLN for each month (the gross pay for one employee that can be realised or two working half time). Renting consulting rooms for the entire duration of the project – the estimated number of hours for 60 people for up to 40 hours with 20 PLN per hour. The cost of medical examinations at the start of the training 60 examinations for 50 PLN remains unchanged since it was the actual cost of the examinations.
3. Medical examinations at the end of the training may be conducted with full payment or it can be proposed to conduct them in a family clinic or to have consultations as to the health and physical condition with the GPs.
4. Physiotherapy examination at the start and at the end of the training, altogether 60 examinations for 111 PLN.
5. Computer and internet skills instructors' pay (1 h = 50 PLN gross). Total number of hours – 6 groups of 10 participants each * 30 hours = 180 hours.
6. Average pay for an hour in 2010²⁰⁾. It may be assumed 36 to 60 PLN. Physical activity instructors' pay for 6 groups of 14 hours for 60 PLN gross/h = 6 groups * 14 hours = 84 hours.
7. Cost of the andragogical workshops and seminars – 22 hours for 90 PLN/hour gross.
8. Cost of opening the clinic and of the supervision outside weekdays. The estimated number of hours 68 for 15 PLN per hour on contract.
9. Administrative and operational costs of the implementation of the project are estimated proportionally for 60 people for 11 months.
10. Cost of renting rooms for 60 people are estimated on the basis of the experience gained while realising the previous project proportionally for 200 people $2577/200 * 60 \text{ PLN} = 773$.
11. Project management cost for 11 months for 2,000 PLN gross.
12. I propose to hire a person on a casual contract with the possibility of further employment with the salary of 2,000 PLN gross. The employer's cost = 26,094.20 PLN.

¹⁹⁾ Interview conducted with the project supervisor M. Ferenc on 10.03.2010.

²⁰⁾ On the basis of: art. 30 ust. 5, art. 33 ust. 3 oraz art. 34 ust. 2 ustawy z dnia 26 stycznia 1982 r. – *Karta Nauczyciela*, Dz. U. z 2006 r. Nr 97, poz. 674, z późn. zm.

13. Scientific consultations – the estimated cost for 3 people for 2,000 PLN gross (the estimation of costs dependant on the scientific degree can be assumed).
14. The teachers' pay for conducting the classes – English, reading and media education, the conscious consumer 50 PLN gross/hour.
15. I propose to hire a full time or half time employee to help the groups to organise themselves, provide advice on how to get organised and how to help oneself and others on the way to professional and social activation and providing advice while starting one's own business. In the group of seniors there might be some people for whom this may be a way of continuing professional activity.
16. At the first stage of the implementation of the project the cost of the instructors' and teachers' pay result from the project, the funds of the organisers of the project, and in the future they should be provided by the local government, employment agencies or partially by the payments made by the seniors as well as from their activities. It would first need to be checked who could contribute or benefit and from which aspect. The areas where the seniors can be active and provide their services are e.g. childcare, taking care of seniors, the ill, and the disabled, organising clubrooms for youth and for adults, helping children and youth to study. Emergency childcare could be provided in the homes of the parents or the seniors depending on the possibilities. However, a survey would have to be carried out in a particular group to find out if the beneficiaries are happy with such way of solving the issue of financing the better functioning of the *@ktywny Senior* project. The person mentioned in point 15 would conduct the preliminary organisation of these activities in cooperation with seniors and various organisation and local government agencies. Seniors can establish an association, for instance, that can, in turn, enter a joint venture with an individual or a legal entity to conduct a particular form of activity. From the aforementioned services seniors could acquire income that would finance $\frac{1}{4}$ of all the expenditures of *@ktywny Senior* project, thanks to which further projects and activating training courses for people of over 60 years of age could be organised in the future.

In the case of a lack of financial support from the borough or other local government agencies some of the planned actions would have to be cancelled and own contribution increased. The seniors of the previous editions of *@ktywny Senior* project could organise a fund raising party concluding the endeavour and devote the collected amount to further editions of the project.

The total estimated cost of the project for 60 people is 118,768.5. Own contribution and the funds from the sponsors cover 39,814.5 PLN (32%) and the necessary financial support is 84,954 PLN (68%) which is presented in Chart 8 below illustrating the project budget with the modifications.

Chart 8. The @ktywny Senior project budget with modifications

Cost type the substantive and the administrative costs of the implementation of the project	Number of units	Cost per unit (in PLN)	Measure type	Total cost (in PLN)	The postulated grant-aid (in PLN)	Own contribution, funds from other sources and the contributions and payments of the beneficiaries
Preparations, identification of potential project beneficiaries	150	3,41	persons	512	0	511,5
Preparing the aims of the @ktywny_Senior project – engaging partners 3 months * 2,000 PLN	3	2000	months	6 000	0	6 000
Renting consulting rooms for the entire duration of the project	40	20	hours	800	0	800
Medical examinations at the start of the training	60	50	Number of medical examinations	3000		0
Physiotherapy examination at the start and at the end of the training, altogether 120 examinations for 0 PLN gross	120	111	Number of examinations	13320	13320	0
Computer and internet skills instructors' pay (1h=50 PLN gross). Total number of hours - 180 hours	180	50	hours	9000	9 000	0
Physical activity instructors' pay for 6 groups for 14 hours for 28 PLN gross per hour	84	60	hours	5040	5040	0
Costs of the andragogical workshops and seminars	22	90	hours	1980	1980	0
Cost of opening the clinic and of the supervision outside weekdays	68	15	hours	1020	1020	0

Administrative and operational costs of the implementation of the project for 60 people are estimated proportionally for 200 people	11	682	months	7502	0	7500
Cost of renting rooms for 60 people estimated proportionally to the cost for 200 people	11	773	months	8503	0	8503
Project management cost for 11 months for 2x2,000 PLN gross, 2x2,372 PLN cost for employer	11	4744	months	52184	52184	0
Private sponsor funding – 5% discount on computers/6 groups of 10 people	60	75	person	4500	0	4500
Publishing the results of the project	2	3000	unit	6000	0	6000
Pay for the teachers and instructors of English classes, reading and media education, the conscious consumer, work and business organisation 50 PLN gross per hour.	14	50	hours	700	700	0
Pay for the instructors on trips 4 × 8 hours = 32 hours for 30 PLN	32	30	hours	960	960	0
Co-financing of the trips	1	1500	unit	1500	750	
TOTAL				122521	84954	33814,5
Own contribution and funds from sponsors	39814,5		%			
Borough co-financing	84954		32			
Total	118768,5		68			

Source: Developed on the basis of the @ktywny Senior project.

Conclusion

The aim of my project, the results of which were first presented in my Master's thesis and subsequently in the above article was to plan the budget of the *@ktywny Senior* project. The article consists of two parts, which was determined by the character of my research. In the first part I have analysed the hitherto budget realised during the previous editions of the project. The second one constitutes a presentation of my work on the basis of the drawn conclusions, a proposition of modifications and introduction of new instruments.

The results are based on the survey research, the interview conducted with the project supervisor as well as the project documents. First and foremost I have made an attempt at demonstrating how to oversee a budget according to the rules of project management. These have proven that the *@ktywny Senior* project contained certain faults that should be eliminated in the future.

First of all, no cost control was carried out²¹⁾. Similarly, financial control was not carried out properly²²⁾. Cost control was lacking throughout the entire duration of the project. Only a balance of costs was made in the form of a budget chart. In this article the way of conducting control over project budget with the use of the Earned Value method was presented in the form of a prognosis. It serves to demonstrate to which elements special attention should be paid and when to react to incorrect changes. Furthermore, the graphical presentation of the method allows for a clear view of the general financial situation of the project.

A correctly prepared plan of cost management and ongoing monitoring of the finances throughout the implementation of the project, comparing the actual costs with the scheduled costs would allow for the ensuring of its timely completion within the agreed budget. This method also gives a lot of essential information on the estimated cost of the completion of the project and if the funds we have will last until the end of the implementation of the scheduled work. That is why the Earned Value method is crucial to the entire endeavour.

It must be emphasised that variances from the scheduled costs are not always connected with mistakes or neglects during the realisation of the project. They are sometimes connected with general changes in the project or they are independent of the organisers and they might appear even while using the best budget estimation. Minor departures from the scheduled costs are not a problem. However, ongoing cost control is crucial, since it allows for an instant and correct reaction and introduction of changes.

²¹⁾ Cost control is connected with a general control of changes. It consists in monitoring of the implemented costs, detecting departures from the plan, ensuring that the changes are applied correctly, preventing incorrect changes, and informing. In other words, it consists in constantly asking „why?“ <http://www.skutecznyprojekt.pl/artykul.htm?AID=100>, retrieved: 11.12.2009.

²²⁾ Financial control includes active participation in the controlled project, e.g. issuing directives on the basis of control results. http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kontrola_finansowa, retrieved: 07.11.2010.

The current pension and social security system is not perfect and it often causes financial problems of seniors. In my opinion a large group of the people of advanced age belong to the poorer social class; that is why they cannot fully realise their hobbies and interests, solve health problems, fulfil some of their cultural needs, deal with loneliness... To solve these problems, at least in part, various agencies and centres aimed at helping seniors are established, one of them being Sektor 3.

These organisations are not always able to finance themselves and they exist thanks to, among others, the projects they organise, with most of them having financial problems. It was also the case with the @ktywny Senior project, which received no support from the borough, which, in turn, caused the teachers and the instructors to work for free. That happens because nobody is willing to take the risk of donating funds to such innovative projects. In the future efforts must be made to ensure such situation does not take place again. The cost should be reduced as much as possible. One of the solutions could be a partial financing of the classes and training courses by the beneficiaries themselves or organising fund raising parties and events with their participation, with the funds collected used to continue the activity of the @ktywny Senior. First of all, the beneficiaries themselves should be asked what can be done to improve their lives. The opinions of the senior participants of the project suggest that they enjoyed the initiative and generally had no objections as to its realisation. It is only necessary to improve financial control, so that the major projects organised are not finished earlier than scheduled.

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Risk management in the @ktywny Senior project

Summary: Ex post risk management of the @ktywny Senior project constitutes the subject of the present article. In the first (theoretical) part the notion of risk, risk management in projects as well as its typology are discussed. In the second (practical) part the risk of the project is identified and described. Having evaluated the risk of the project the propositions of its management are introduced, such as risk minimization, assigning a person or persons responsible for risk minimization, and establishing the cost of risk management. At the end of the article the conclusions are proposed, in which the losses and mistakes of the organisers resulting from the lack of ex ante risk management of the project are described. In the ex post risk management it turned out that the biggest losses were: the lack of cooperation with the Powiatowe Biuro Pracy (district employment agency), because of which the beneficiaries were not informed of the opportunity to employ seniors, the lack of cooperation with secondary schools, because of which no intergenerational relationships were established, as well as the lack of information on what needs to be organised before starting the activities – the organisers did not know that every beneficiary needed a medical certificate from a GP to be allowed to participate in physical exercises.

The lack of contracts with partners, teachers, and beneficiaries which could lead to any of them dropping out of the project at any time was yet another neglect of the organisers. In the future the cooperation should be formalised to avoid such situations. A further mistake was the lack of safety devices in the gym which could result in serious injury.

Fortunately, despite the lack of ex ante risk management of the @ktywny Senior project it may be stated that it was successful and it has contributed to the activation of people of over 60 years of age; however, in the future the influence of "luck" should be reduced and a "plan" introduced along with an effective risk management.

Key words: project risk, legal risk, technical risk, financial risk, identification of project risk, project risk evaluation, FMEA, RPN, risk detection.

The notion of project risk and risk management in projects

If we want to discuss the risk of a particular endeavour it needs to be explained what project risk and its management are. The definition specifies that the phenomenon is uncertain, related to the future, and its appearance will have a negative effect on the project¹. Risk management in a project is usually a constant, iterative process leading to identification and analysis, and subsequently evaluation and establishing the hierarchy of the encountered risks, and finally to selection of methods of controlling them. As a result risk management allows for a collecting of experiences that might serve to provide solutions to problems in further projects².

Typology of project risk

Legal risk

Legal risk is connected with receiving and the time needed to receive the various types of permissions necessary to implement the project, such as:

- decision on the conditions of construction and land use on the basis of the current spatial planning,
- agreements and opinions of government institutions and agencies, related to the project,
- government (health and employment regulations, etc.),
- agreements and opinions with providers of electricity, water, plumbing, telecommunication, etc.,
- permission to use a building (acceptance)³).

Further legal risks of a project may be connected with:

- the language used,
- current legal regulations,

¹) www.skutecznyprojekt.pl/artykul.htm?AID=17, retrieved: 16.01.2010.

²) J. Davidson, *Zarządzanie projektami w organizacjach*, Warsaw 2001.

³) www.pwsz.nysa.pl/instytut/finanse/wilimowska/ryzyko2.pdf, retrieved: 20.01.2010.

- location,
- document faults,
- technological aspects (the know-how, etc.),
- intervention of third parties,
- decisions of the government and central agencies (regulations)⁴⁾.

Technical risk

Technical risk is connected with the will to improve the effectiveness or the necessity to adapt to new regulations during the planning of a project. Technological progress increases the frequency of occurrence of the risk of this category⁵⁾. The factors of technical risk may be:

- the scope of the product or the project,
- work schedule – delays are a result of a wrong organisation of WBS works and the use of an incorrect mutual task dependence model, unrealistic schedule based on optimistic assessment of the time needed to perform the works, work effectiveness lower than that assumed in the plan, wrong resource management, incorrect estimation of the resource expenditures (labour-intenseness, the amounts), unclearly defined deadlines in the contracts as well as payment dates, ineffective group communication within the project,
- procedures, technology,
- norms and standards unknown or not defined in the contract,
- the quality of equipment, machines, devices,
- the quality of research and development works,
- the choice of suppliers and co-operators (unreliability, additional cost, failures to fulfil the contract),
- packaging and transport,
- effectiveness and productivity of work, experience of the members of the team,
- availability of resources,
- spare parts⁶⁾.

Financial risk

Financial risk appears in the case of, among others, financing an investment with outside capital. Using such funds leads to additional costs connected with the necessity to pay the credit. Financial risk is highly influenced by changes of the interest rates which are difficult to predict⁷⁾. The factors of financial risk may be:

⁴⁾ www.ioz.pwr.wroc.pl/pracownicy/betta/indeks.php, retrieved: 16.01.2010.

⁵⁾ J. Skalik, *Zarządzanie projektami*, Wrocław 2009.

⁶⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

- incorrect estimation of the cost,
- means of financing (credits),
- payment deadlines not connected with the work performed,
- payment conditions (fixed or corrected prices),
- dates of payment (interests rate changes),
- exchange rates, soft currencies,
- lack of payment after the work is finished,
- fines (lump sum, limits),
- tax regulations (especially foreign),
- cancelling or ending the contract,
- social problems, decisions of the government and central agencies,
- civil liability, local safety regulations, security⁸⁾.

Identification, assessment, and propositions of risk management of the @ktywny Senior project

Risk management in a project was conducted with the use of the Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA), the outline of which is presented below.

1. Identification of risk on the basis of:

- interviews with the beneficiaries of the project, including three men and ten women aged 62 to 75 of higher and secondary education; in the interview the beneficiaries were asked about their fears connected with learning computer skills and using the internet and learning English language, their difficulties connected with any of the activities organised in the educational aspect, fears connected with physical activity, comments related to the medical examinations carried out before the start of the project, conflicts within the groups, interference of the project classes with other activities and if the classes taking place 5 times a week for 2 months are not too much of an effort,
- interviews with the teachers and instructors participating in the project (health education of people in late adulthood, physical and health education, computer and internet skills training, constructing group communication), the teachers and instructors answered the questions related to the difficulties that the beneficiaries had with the conducted classes, the willingness of the beneficiaries to participate in the classes, conflicts during the classes, the practicality of the taught subjects, objections related to the organisation of the project, competences of the voluntary workers and increasing the effectiveness of the project,
- interview with the project supervisor M. Ferenc,
- analysis of the project plan and writing a report on this basis.

2. Assessment of risk:

- assessment of the probability of the occurrence of failure: from very high – 10 to marginal – 1,

⁸⁾ Ibid., p. 3.

- assessment of the severity of the risk from dangerous (no warning) character of the effect of the risk – 10, to lack of any effect of the risk on the project – 1,
- assessment of the detection of the risk from total unpredictability – 10 to near certainty of prediction – 1,
- calculation of the Risk Probability Number – $RPN = \text{probability} * \text{severity} * \text{predictability}$.

The calculation of the risk was carried out on the basis of interviews with the beneficiaries, the teachers and instructors, and the project supervisor M.Ferenc, just like in the case of identification.

3. Propositions of risk management involving risk minimization and assessment of the cost of risk management⁹⁾.

Identification of project risk

Legal risk

As it was mentioned before the risks involved in a project are of legal, technical, and financial nature. Identification of the risks of the first category was achieved on the basis of the interviews conducted between 16.03.2010 and 19.03.2010 with the teachers and with M. Ferenc as well as the analysis of the project plan and the concluding report. The risk mentioned is described below.

1. Lack of contracts between:
 - the partners in the project – it may result in any of them dropping out at any time which leads to the lack of formalised responsibilities of the partners and, as a result, the devolving of responsibilities by one partner to another,
 - partners in the project and the teachers/instructors – it may result in any of the teachers dropping out at any time and a lack of clearly defined and formalised responsibilities that the teachers have to assume,
 - partners in the project and the beneficiaries – it may result in the beneficiaries dropping out of the project or a lack of activity of the beneficiaries, in such a situation the beneficiaries are not obliged to participate in the classes realised as part of the project and they may skip them without any consequences,
 - partners in the project and the voluntary workers - it may lead to the voluntary workers dropping out, which would result in a lack of help during the classes with the beneficiaries.
2. Mistakes in the contracts between the partners in the project related to the responsibilities – lack of clearly defined responsibilities of each of the partners which, just like in the case of contracts, may lead to devolving the responsibilities by one partner to another.

⁹⁾ www.adamdrobniak.pl/docs/05%20-%20Zarzadzanie%20ryzykiem%20projektu.pdf, retrieved: 17.01.2010.

3. Mistakes in the contracts between the partners in the project and the teachers related to:

- putting an incorrect number of class hours in the contract that the teacher is to conduct for a fixed pay. If the number of hours is lower than scheduled it may lead to a lack of completion of the curriculum. A higher number of hours than scheduled, in turn, may lead to the teacher demanding a higher pay, which results in legal proceedings, a lack of sufficient quality of the classes (without being paid for a part of the conducted classes the teacher might be indifferent to whether the beneficiaries understand everything and whether they make progress),
- putting an incorrect amount of the teachers' pay in the contract. If the amount is lower than scheduled it may lead to a lower quality of the conducted classes. If the amount is higher it may lead to serious financial problems of the project, especially in case of the mistakes being made in a number of contracts (financial risk is also connected with it),

4. Letting the seniors without a medical certificate of their GPs allowing them to participate in physical activities or those with invalid certificates (e.g. no stamp or signature of the GP) as well as those who have not been allowed by a GP to participate in physical activities exercise; such mistake made by an instructor may lead to serious legal consequences in case of any of the beneficiaries suffering an injury during the classes.

5. The beneficiaries were not informed by the instructors of the proper behaviour during some of the physical activities - this may lead to more or less serious injury and the beneficiary going to court and demanding an indemnity as well as dropping out of the project. Such situation will certainly influence its quality.

Accidents during physical activities lead to injuries caused by the fact that a beneficiary failed to follow the instructions of the person conducting the class and did not behave properly while doing exercise. As in the above case such situation will influence the quality of the project, because a person with an injury cannot participate in physical activities. Lack of safety measures during physical exercise may result in an accident of serious consequences, which may in turn lead to a legal case made against the organisers of the project and the beneficiary demanding indemnity and just like in the two formerly discussed situations the beneficiary may drop out of the project.

Mistakes in the grant application to the Wrocław borough consisting in:

1) formal mistakes:

- putting in incorrect information about the entity submitting the application,
- incomplete information about the entity submitting the application,

2) substantive mistakes:

- the aims and tasks of the project can be described in the application in such an unclear way as to make the borough officials consider it incompatible with the "Strategia Wrocław w perspektywie 2020 plus" (strategy – Wrocław in the 2020 plus perspective),

- omitting all the areas of the “Strategia Wrocław w perspektywie 2020 plus” that the @ktywny Senior project can be active in.

The above mistakes may lead to the borough rejecting the grant application of the @ktywny Senior project which results in the organisations constituting the partners in the project having to reduce costs, which might, in turn, have a great influence on its quality and cause a substantial financial risk.

A lack of clear procedures related to the protection of the personal information about the beneficiaries may lead to a leaking of the information and its illegal use. Had the beneficiaries become victims of such practice they could sue the partners in the project and drop out, since they would come to the conclusion that it has more disadvantages than advantages.

Technical risk

A further risk connected with the project is the technical risk. It has been identified on the basis of the interviews with the beneficiaries, the teachers/instructors, and M. Ferenc between 16.03.2010 and 19.03.2010 as well the analysis of the project plan and the subsequent report. The technical risk of the project is presented below.

Difficulties in using computers belong to the first group of technical risks.

Difficulties in using the internet constitute the second group.

Yet another group of technical risks is the one connected with the problems with learning basic English vocabulary related to working with computers and the internet. These problems may be connected with the age of the beneficiaries, since for most people of over 60 years of age acquiring foreign languages and memorising new words is more difficult than for young people. The difficulties may result in making the acquisition of the skills necessary to use computer and the internet on the basic level slower.

Difficult, uninteresting, or boring subjects conducted in the education field may constitute another risk. If the subjects are too difficult the entire project might fail, since the beneficiaries will not be able to learn them sufficiently, because they will not be able to understand them. If the subjects are boring or uninteresting they will only be a waste of time to the beneficiaries and they most probably will never use the knowledge acquired throughout these classes or they will learn nothing due to their lack of interest. It may happen that the beneficiaries will skip the classes that they have problems with.

The lack of participation of the seniors with injuries or without a medical certificate from their GPs or those not interested in certain forms of physical activity – e.g. a low number of those willing to do Nordic Walking – constitutes another risk that may have a negative effect on the quality of the project, because in a such situation one of the objectives of the project will not be fully realised.

Too high an intensity of the classes may prove a further risk. Classes taking place 5 times a week for 2 months may constitute too much of an effort for the beneficiaries, which may result in their lack of active participation.

Another risk is people who despite health problems such as hypertension or great memory difficulties are being allowed by their GPs to participate in the project – it may lead to such people dropping out of the project and at the same time decreasing its effectiveness, because with the lowering of the number of participants the number of people trained is lowered, as well.

Further types of risks are:

Project classes interfering with other activities of the beneficiaries – professional or personal ones – which could result in the beneficiaries not participating in the classes which could lead to their falling behind and have a negative influence on the skills they are trained to acquire.

Conflicts within the groups between the beneficiaries and the teachers/instructors or between the beneficiaries and the voluntary workers, e.g. the beneficiaries might declare that there is something they cannot do and the teacher or the voluntary worker may think that they should have learned it a long time ago – this may cause the beneficiaries to become disappointed with the subject conducted by the particular teacher. It might be the case that a beneficiary will deny a voluntary worker's competences to provide assistance and will only expect to receive help from the teacher.

More theoretical and less practical classes related to physical activity – this causes an incomplete carrying out of one of the objectives of the project related to physical activity of seniors.

The teachers' classes, the classes at the University of Wrocław interfering with those organised as part of the project. If such interference takes place a teacher may drop out of the project and the classes that were conducted by that instructor might be cancelled.

Mistakes in class schedule related to:

- 1) putting down a subject other than the one that the group actually has on a particular day and at a particular time; if the group does not learn of the actual time of their class this time is lost, and if the group learns of the actual class they have to waste time to get there.
- 2) putting in two subjects on the same day and at the same time which just like in the former case may result in the class being missed and time being wasted.
- 3) putting in classes that a group does not actually have on the particular day and at a certain time, which does not have any major influence on the project itself, but the beneficiaries waste their personal time devoting it to coming to classes that do not actually take place.

If the two first mistakes are not solved the first time they are made they result in serious consequences for the project in its entirety and its final effect.

Breaking a computer, a screen or other devices.

It results in some of the beneficiaries falling behind schedule, because they will not be able to acquire the skills planned for a particular class.

Lack of competences of the voluntary workers – it may lead to the failure to provide necessary assistance or a complete lack thereof during the computer skills

training course with the beneficiaries. In this way the quality of the entire work with the beneficiaries is decreased.

Lack of cooperation with secondary schools in order to encourage young people to become voluntary workers during the computer training courses – which leads to the failure to establish intergenerational relationships and may have negative influence on the quality of the project.

Lack of cooperation with employment agencies at the district and voivodship level, which results in the beneficiaries not receiving sufficient information on the legal and organisational opportunities of finding jobs for seniors which, in turn, influences the quality of the project.

Mistakes in the project schedule related to the date of recruitment of the beneficiaries – it may lead to a situation when there is not enough time to find a sufficient number of beneficiaries.

Financial risk

The last risk of the project is the financial risk. It was identified on the basis of the interview with M. Ferenc on 18.03.2010. The identified risks are described below.

Underestimation or overestimation of the budget caused by an incorrect estimation of the costs, e.g. an erroneous calculation of the teachers' and instructors' pay or the cost of the medical examinations, or an erroneous calculation of the costs of the materials necessary for the classes with the beneficiaries. If the budget is overestimated the funds that could be used for certain tasks, not necessarily connected with the project, remain useless. If the budget is underestimated it may result in the project not being completed or not being fully completed, because there will not be enough funds to do all that was planned.

Lack of financial support from the Wrocław borough may turn out fatal for the project, because there will not be enough money to pay the teachers and to pay for the medical examinations; it may happen that the teachers will not be willing to work for free and they will cease their cooperation with the partners in the project or the number of the beneficiaries of the project will have to be reduced.

Putting too high a pay for an hour in the contract for the teachers – if the teacher will expect to receive the amount stated in the contract instead of the one that was planned and negotiated it may lead to a lack of funds for other instructors and having to reduce other costs of the project, e.g. providing less teaching materials for the classes with the beneficiaries. There risk is even more serious if the number of the teachers with too high payment rates in their contracts is greater.

A sudden demand of a pay rise from a teacher immediately before signing the contract – such behaviour may cause similar reaction of other instructors, a pay rise for the teachers may lead to serious financial problems for the project and might constitute the cause of its utter failure, because there will not be enough funds to implement it. It may also cause serious problems with its quality, e.g. it will turn out to be necessary to save money by reducing the number of teaching materials that the beneficiaries use in class or to reduce the number of the classes conducted

by the teachers demanding pay rise – as a result, a teacher will run a lower number of classes as part of a particular course, but his pay will not change.

A lack of a financial buffer in the project budget which should be a result of the underestimation of that budget – as in the above cases, it may result in ongoing cost reductions during the implementation of the project and as such might cause the lowering of its quality.

Risk assessment of the project

Risk assessment was conducted with the use of the Failure Mode and Effects Analysis (FMEA). The necessary suppositions are presented in the charts below.

In the case of the assessment of the probability of a particular risk the author made the following suppositions:

Chart 1. Suppositions for the assessment of the probability of a particular risk

Probability of occurrence of a factor	Rating
0,9–1, probability of occurrence very high	10
0,8–0,89, probability of occurrence very high	9
0,7–0,79, probability of occurrence high	8
0,6–0,69, probability of occurrence high	7
0,5–0,59, probability of occurrence moderate	6
0,4–0,49, probability of occurrence moderate	5
0,3–0,39, probability of occurrence moderate	4
0,2–0,29, probability of occurrence low	3
0,1–0,19, probability of occurrence low	2
0–0,09, probability of occurrence marginal	1

Source: Developed by the author.

In the case of the assessment of the severity of a risk the following suppositions apply:

Chart 2. Suppositions for the assessment of the severity of a risk

Influence on the project	Rating
Hazardous (no warning)	10
Hazardous (with a warning)	9
Very high	8
High	7
Moderate	6
Low	5
Very low	4
Minor	3
Very minor	2
No effect	1

Source: Developed by the author.

In the case of risk detection the following suppositions apply:

Chart 3. Risk detection suppositions

Detection	Rating
Total uncertainty of detection	10
Highly marginal possibility of detection	9
Marginal	8
Very low	7
Low	6
Moderate	5
More than moderate	4
High	3
Very high	2
Almost certain	1

Source: Developed by the author.

Calculation of the Risk Probability Number

$$RPN = P \cdot S \cdot D$$

With:

- level of probability (P),
- severity (S),
- detection (D).
- index values of the RPN - from 1 (min.) to 1000 (max.)¹⁰⁾.

Legal risk

The assessment of the first risk is illustrated as an example, the further assessments are presented in the chart.

The risk assessment was carried out on the basis of the interview with the project supervisor.

The probability of the occurrence of the risk of a lack of contracts between the partners in the project or between the partners and the teachers and between the partners and the beneficiaries is very high; on the basis of the interview with the project supervisor I give it a rating of 9,5 out of 10. The severity of the risk is very high and it receives a rating of 9 due to its substantial influence on the project in its entirety with its possible results being the incompleteness of the project; because the results of this risk tend to appear with a certain warning i.e. there are some warning signs that somebody wants to drop out its detection is high and gets the rating of 2,

¹⁰⁾ J. Skalik (ed.), op.cit., p. 6.

since the partners as well as the teachers and the beneficiaries originally trust each other and they believe that written contracts are unnecessary and oral agreements are sufficient.

The index value of the RPN is in this case:

$$RPN = 10 \cdot 9 \cdot 2 = 180.$$

Chart 4. Compilation of the assessed values of legal risks of the @ktywny Senior project

Risk	Probability rating	Influence on the project rating	Detection rating	RPN value
Mistakes in the contracts between the partners in the project	0,4, rating 5	Very high, rating 8	Low, rating 6	$5 \cdot 8 \cdot 6 = 240$
Mistakes in the contracts between the partners in the project and the teachers	0,5, rating 6	Very high, rating 8	Very high, rating 2	$6 \cdot 8 \cdot 2 = 96$
The risk of letting the seniors without a medical certificate of their GPs allowing them to participate in physical activities or those with invalid certificates as well as those who have not been allowed by a GP to participate in physical activities exercise	0,01, rating 1	Low, rating 5	Low, rating 7	$1 \cdot 5 \cdot 7 = 35$
The risk of the beneficiaries not being informed by the instructors of the proper behaviour during some of the physical activities	0,02, rating 1	Hazardous, no warning, rating 10	Low, rating 7	$RPN = 1 \cdot 10 \cdot 7 = 70$
The risk of accidents during physical activities that lead to injuries caused by the fact that a beneficiary failed to follow the instructions of the person conducting the class and did not behave properly while doing exercise	0,25, rating 3	High, rating 7	Moderate, rating 5	$3 \cdot 7 \cdot 5 = 105$
The risk of a lack of safety devices during physical activities on the gym	1, rating 10	High, rating 7	Almost certain, rating 1	$10 \cdot 7 \cdot 1 = 70$
The risk of mistakes in the grant application submitted to the Wrocław borough	0,45, rating 5	Vary high, rating 8	Moderate, rating 5	$5 \cdot 8 \cdot 5 = 200$
The risk of the personal information of the beneficiaries being leaked and used for illegal purposes	0,25, rating 3	High, rating 7	Low, rating 6	$3 \cdot 7 \cdot 6 = 126$

Source: Developed by the author.

The highest RPN value is attributed to the mistakes in the contracts between the partners in the project, with the lowest one - to the risk of letting the seniors without a medical certificate of their GPs allowing them to participate in physical activities exercise.

Technical risks

The assessment of technical risks was carried out on the basis of the interviews with the beneficiaries, the teachers, and the project supervisor. The first assessment serves as an introductory example, the further ones are presented in the chart.

The risk connected with using computers is moderate and the interviews with the beneficiaries and the teachers lead to the conclusion that the probability of the occurrence of the risk is 0.3 (it is the number of beneficiaries and teachers who gave an affirmative answer to the question related to problems with using computers divided by the number of all who answered the question) and it receives the rating of 4. The effects of this risk on the project may possibly be very dangerous, that is why the severity of this risk gets the rating of 9. The detection of the risk is rather high; it is easy to predict that the beneficiaries will have certain problems with using the computers, that is why it receives the rating of 3.

The RPN in this case is:

$$RPN = 4 \cdot 9 \cdot 3 = 108$$

Chart 5. Compilation of the assessed values of technical risks of the @ktywyny Senior project

Risk	Probability rating	Influence on the project rating	Detection rating	RPN value
Risk connected to difficulties in using the internet	0,15, rating 2	High, rating 7	High, rating 3	$2 \cdot 7 \cdot 3 = 42$
The risk connected with the difficulty in learning basic English vocabulary connected with using computers and the internet	0,53, rating 6	Moderate, rating 6	High, rating 3	$6 \cdot 6 \cdot 3 = 108$
The connected the fact that some of the subject might appear boring, uninteresting, or too difficult to the beneficiaries	0,38, rating 4	Hazardous with a warning, rating 9	High, rating 3	$4 \cdot 9 \cdot 3 = 108$
The risk connected to the fact that some of the beneficiaries will not participate in physical activities	0,2, rating 3	High, rating 7	High, rating 3	$3 \cdot 7 \cdot 3 = 63$
The risk connected to the fact that the classes might appear too intensive	0,53, rating 6	Moderate, rating 6	High, rating 3	$6 \cdot 6 \cdot 3 = 108$
The risk connected with a person with serious health problems being allowed by a doctor to participate in the project	0,01, rating 1	Hazardous with a warning, rating 9	Low, rating 6	$1 \cdot 9 \cdot 6 = 54$
The risk of the classes interfering with the beneficiaries' other activities	0,3, rating 4	Very high, rating 8	Very high, rating 2	$4 \cdot 8 \cdot 2 = 64$
Risk of conflicts	0,05, rating 1	High, rating 7	High, rating 3	$1 \cdot 7 \cdot 3 = 21$

Risk connected with the number of theoretical classes on the subject of physical activity being higher than that of the practical ones	0,8, rating 9	High, rating 7	Moderate, rating 5	$9 \cdot 7 \cdot 5 = 315$
The risk of the classes interfering with the teachers' other activities	0,1, rating 2	High, rating 7	High, rating 3	$2 \cdot 7 \cdot 3 = 42$
The risk of mistakes in the schedule	0,7, rating 8	Moderate, rating 6	Moderate, rating 5	$8 \cdot 6 \cdot 5 = 240$
The risk related to technical problems with computers	0,38, rating 4	High, rating 7	Very high, rating 2	$4 \cdot 7 \cdot 2 = 56$
The risk of lack of competences of the voluntary workers	0,01, rating 1	Moderate, rating 6	Low, rating 6	$1 \cdot 6 \cdot 6 = 36$
The risk of a lack of cooperation with secondary schools	0,7, rating 8	Moderate, rating 6	Very high, rating 2	$8 \cdot 6 \cdot 2 = 96$
The risk of a lack of cooperation with employment agencies on the borough and voivodship level	0,7, rating 8	High, rating 7	High, rating 3	$8 \cdot 7 \cdot 3 = 168$
The risk connected with schedule mistakes related to the date of the recruitment of participants	0,2, rating 3	High, rating 7	High, rating 3	$3 \cdot 7 \cdot 3 = 63$

Source: Developed by the author.

The highest RPN value is related to the risk connected with the number of theoretical classes on the subject of physical activity being higher than that of the practical ones, and the lowest to the risk of conflicts.

Financial risks

The assessment of financial risks was carried out on the basis of the interview with the project supervisor. The assessment is presented in the chart below.

Chart 6. Compilation of the assessed values of financial risks of the @ktywny Senior project

Risk	Probability rating	Influence on the project rating	Detection rating	RPN value
The risk of underestimation or overestimation of the budget	0,8, rating 9	Hazardous without warning, rating 10	High, rating 3	$9 \cdot 10 \cdot 3 = 270$
The risk of a lack of financial support of the Wrocław borough	0,9, rating 10	Hazardous without warning, rating 10	Low, rating 6	$10 \cdot 10 \cdot 6 = 600$
The risk of putting too high a pay for in a teacher's contract	0,5, rating 6	Very high, rating 8	Very high, rating 2	$6 \cdot 8 \cdot 2 = 96$
The risk connected with a teacher or teachers demanding a pay rise before signing the contract	0,1, rating 2	Very high, rating	Low, rating 6	$2 \cdot 8 \cdot 6 = 96$
The risk connected with a lack of financial buffer in budget of the project	0,6, rating 7	High, rating 7	High, rating 3	$7 \cdot 7 \cdot 3 = 147$

Source: Developed by the author.

The highest RPN value is related to the risk of a lack of financial support of the Wrocław borough, with the lowest ones related to the risk of putting too high

a pay in a teacher's contract and the risk connected with a teacher or teachers demanding a pay rise before signing the contract.

Propositions of risk management in the project

The author individually prepared a description of the actions that should be undertaken in order to prevent or reduce the particular types of risks along with a description of the costs of prevention or reduction of these (not all the cases of risk prevention involved additional costs).

Legal risk management

Contracts must be prepared and signed between:

- partners in the project,
- partners in the project and the teachers,
- partners in the project and the beneficiaries.

This will lead to a formalisation and clear definition of the responsibilities of both sides. It will make it obligatory to follow certain rules, because these will be enumerated in the contracts.

The costs of preparing such contracts are administrative - the costs of the pieces of paper and printing.

If one wishes to avoid mistakes in the contracts between the partners related to the responsibilities, they must first be defined and clarified and then put in the contract. The persons who need to ensure that such mistakes are avoided are the representatives of the partners in the project.

The mistakes in the contracts between the partners in the project and the teachers can be prevented by writing the contract in two identical copies and then re-reading it in order to find potential differences between the contract and the previous oral agreements. The costs of preventing these risks do not appear in this case.

When attempting to avoid the risk of letting the seniors without a medical certificate of their GPs allowing them to participate in physical activities or those with invalid certificates as well as those who have not been allowed by a GP to participate in physical activities exercise it must be made clear in the contract signed with the instructor that if this happens he will be held fully responsible.

It should be defined in the contracts with the instructors that it is their responsibility to inform the beneficiaries of the proper behaviour during the particular types of physical exercise practiced as part of the physical activity classes.

To prevent accidents during the physical activities related to the beneficiaries ignoring the instructions and behaving improperly during the exercises it must be clearly stated in their contracts that failure to comply with the rules established by the instructors leads to the acceptance of full responsibility for any and all possible consequences.

The action minimizing the risk of accidents during physical activities is fitting the gym with necessary safety devices. The person responsible for buying this equipment should be one of the employees of the Fundacja "Umbrella" ("Umbrella" foundation), since the gym is located in the Centrum Sektor 3, and the building is managed by "Umbrella". The cost of the measures to prevent this risk is the price of the safety devices.

To avoid the mistakes in the grant application submitted to the borough it must be made sure that all the information about the submitting entity are contained in the form and that they are correct; it should also be checked if no substantive mistakes such as those described earlier in the risk identification part are to be found.

The personal information of the project beneficiaries should be stored in such a way as to prevent leaking; it is best to store them in the special, sufficiently protected computer programmes made for this purpose (databases). The cost of this action is the price of the computer programmes for storing data.

Technical risk management

During the classes related to using computers and the internet the teachers should inform the beneficiaries of the opportunity to freely ask the instructors of the voluntary workers in the case of problems or difficulties with any of the subjects. Consultations ought to be organised for people falling behind schedule and failing to keep up with the rest of the group. Each of the teachers would have consultations twice a week in the afternoon with the duration of two classes for any people having the aforementioned problems. The cost of such preventive measure is the teacher's pay for the consultations.

To prevent problems with learning the basic English vocabulary related to using computers and the internet an effort must be made to start getting the beneficiaries accustomed to the English language connected with computer skills from the very beginning of the training course. It is necessary, just like in the case of computer skills training classes, to organise consultations twice a week for those with any problems. The cost of such preventive measure is the teacher's pay for the consultations.

A preventive measure in the case of the subjects appearing uninteresting, boring, or too difficult could be to hold a meeting in the conference room during which a teacher would speak of the subject he is to conduct and the employees of the partners in the project would discuss the organisation of the project. At the end of such meeting the future beneficiaries could be given surveys about the subjects, where they could declare which of them they find interesting and which they do not. This should be done before signing the contracts with the teachers. The cost of this preventive measure would be made up of the teachers' pay for the time devoted to the introduction of their subjects and the costs of the surveys for the future beneficiaries.

To prevent the risk of a number of the beneficiaries failing to participate in the physical activities due to injuries or a lack of medical certificates from their

GPs allowing them to exercise or a low interest in certain sports a reserve list should be drawn up of the beneficiaries who are not interested in participating in all the classes organised as part of the project or who for various reasons cannot come to all of them but would like to take part in the physical activities from the start to the end. To cost of such actions would be the expenditures for the invitations to participate in physical exercises sent out to all the future beneficiaries who have originally declared the willingness to attend the project classes; the invitations can be sent to everyone since the surveys are anonymous and it is never known who answered that he is not interested in e.g. philosophy but would certainly like to take part in physical activities.

The beneficiaries ought to be asked in the surveys if attending classes 5 times a week for 2 months would not be too much of an effort. In order for the project activities not to interfere with other activities the schedule should be adjusted to the availability of all the beneficiaries.

There is no way of guaranteeing that GPs will refrain from allowing ill people to participate in the project; this risk cannot be prevented.

To prevent conflicts within the groups the teachers and the voluntary workers should never be condescending. If the conflicts are started by the beneficiaries themselves, because they e.g. cannot understand something and they do not want to be assisted by a voluntary worker and they demand to be helped by the teacher exclusively the voluntary worker should explain to the beneficiary that he is here because he has been properly trained. In case of the entire group expressing dissatisfaction with a particular subject it is best that it is changed.

In order to prevent the number of theoretical classes from prevailing over the number of the practical ones in relation to the physical activities the partners in the project should be informed about the conditions that the seniors have to meet to participate in practical physical activities; it would be best to ask the instructors about it.

In order to avoid the interference of the project classes with the activities of the teachers the employees responsible for creating the groups should draw up a roster for the teachers and consult it with them.

If the schedule is centrally planned and the beneficiaries cannot sign up to a particular group the employee drawing up the schedule ought to make sure that there are no mistakes in it, e.g. if a particular group does not have two classes at the same time.

To reduce the results of technical problems with computers it would be necessary to buy one extra computer for each of the labs, because if there are 10 people in a group and there are ten computers in a lab and one of them breaks down then one of the beneficiaries practically misses the class, since there is no additional computer to use. In the case of a malfunction the computer technician of the object should be called immediately. The costs of reducing such risks are made up of the prices of the computers.

To prevent a lack of cooperation with secondary schools the project should get more promotion in the press (advertisement in local newspapers). It is necessary

for the employees-partners in the project to talk to the principals of secondary schools. The cost of this measure is the price of the newspaper advertisements.

In order to establish cooperation with the employment agencies at the district and voivodship level representatives of the partners in the project should talk personally to representatives of the agencies and convince them that the seniors are able to work.

To reduce the consequences of a wrong schedule of the recruitment of beneficiaries a time buffer should be established – i.e. extra time in case the recruitment process is prolonged.

Financial risk management

To prevent the underestimation or overestimation of the budget related to an erroneous estimation of the costs the person planning the budget should make sure that all the amounts are entered correctly and check if any of the costs have changed.

To prevent a lack of financial support from the borough representatives of the partners in the project should talk personally to representatives of the city office and convince them that professional activation of seniors is necessary and that these people can remain professionally active to a certain extent.

The situation when a teacher demands a pay rise before signing the contract cannot be fully avoided. However, representatives of the partners in the project can negotiate with them, which does not mean that the organisers will concede. As a last resort another teacher can be found, who will agree to conduct the project course for the formerly planned pay.

A financial buffer should be considered when planning the budget – extra funds to be used in the case of an underestimation of costs.

Conclusion

Risk is an inherent element of all endeavours – including the *@ktywny Senior* project. Introducing risk management to a project would prepare its organisers for certain unfavourable situations that might take place during its implementation and they would also have ready plan of work in such situations. The project suffered because of the lack of risk management. It influenced its quality, making it worse than it could have been if risk management was introduced at the planning stage. The greatest failures were the lack of cooperation with the employment agency at the district level due to which the beneficiaries were not informed of the employed opportunities for people their age, the lack of cooperation with secondary schools which denied the seniors and the youth the opportunity to establish intergenerational relationships with the exchange of openness and experience and stability and the lack of information about the actions that should be undertaken before starting the project. The organisers did not have a sufficient knowledge of the fact that each of the beneficiaries needs a medical certificate from a GP in order to be allowed

to participate in physical activities which caused a waste of time and resulted in a lower number of physical activity classes conducted. It could have been avoided, had risk management been introduced to the project. The lack of contracts that could have at any time resulted in a partner, a teacher, or a beneficiary dropping out of the project was a big mistake of the organisers. In the future the cooperation should be formalised to avoid such situations. Another serious mistake was the lack of safety devices in the gym, which could have led to a serious accident. However, it may be stated that despite the lack of risk management the *@ktywny Senior* project was successful and contributed to the activation of people over 60 years of age.

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Recapitulation of the programme as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project

Summary: Prezentowany artykuł stanowi podsumowanie całego projektu *@ktywny Senior* z perspektywy jego inicjatora, organizatora i kierownika. Szczegółowo omawia inspiracje, cele i zadania, jakie postawili przed sobą twórcy przedsięwzięcia, a następnie – w ramach dobrych praktyk, które mogą być przydatne innym podmiotom, omawia mocne i słabe strony zrealizowanego projektu.

Key words: *@ktywny Senior*, project, age of late adulthood, seniors.

The idea of the project emerged from the observations of the behaviour of seniors in medical centres. These were complemented by the diagnosis of the senior environment carried out by the Dolnośląska Rada ds. Seniorów (Lower Silesian council

for senior citizen matters) at the office of the Marszałek Województwa Dolnośląskiego (Lower Silesian voivodship marshal) and the University of the Third Age (U3A) in Wrocław which indicates a great need for developmental workshops for this social group. The dynamic development of the U3As in Wrocław and the Lower Silesia may serve as an example. The problems of the ageing society are visible in many aspects of social life. The clinics are one of them, where one may encounter a substantial number of "unnecessary" visits of seniors which often have no confirmation in health-related issues – the conclusion was drawn from conversations with the medical staff. Sitting in the waiting rooms of the GPs is rather a result of the need to maintain contacts with other people and to leave the house "for a reason", as well as of the feeling of alienation in their immediate environments. Inspired by these conclusions we have created the @ktywny Senior project, which combined various organisations-entities working with seniors. These are the U3As, Senior Clubs, non-governmental organisations, and various Roman Catholic Church-related organisations concentrating on the promotion of being active among seniors.

The leading entity was the Ogólnopolskie Stowarzyszenie Na Rzecz Rozwoju Otwartej Opieki Zdrowotnej "Nova-Med" (the Polish association for the development of open healthcare "Nova Med"). Of course, the University of the Third Age at the University of Wrocław also participated - it is a centre combining a constant source of inspirations with the potential of the teachers. The Fundacja Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych "Umbrella" (the NGOs support foundation "Umbrella") that manages the Centrum Sektor 3 became the right place to conduct the entirety of the endeavour.

The @ktywny Senior project was a pilot initiative aimed at seniors – people of over 60 years of age, inhabitants of the Popowice district of Wrocław. The project lasted for 3 months with the participation of 60 people. The classes and the workshops were organised in the building of the Centrum Sektor 3. The planned medical examinations were carried out in a clinic situated next to the Centrum. The open air recreational activities took place in the park in the vicinity of one of the mentioned buildings. Therefore, the location proved to fulfil a whole range of educational needs.

An attempt to transfer the experiences of the University of the Third Age at the University of Wrocław to a city district of exceptionally high number of seniors estimated at 22,8% of the population constituted the reason for the implementation of the project. Apart from the Popowice districts, the areas of Gądów, Kosmonautów, and Kozanów have a similar population age structure.

The main aim of the project was to increase the mobility, social, physical, and professional activity of seniors (people of over 60 years of age) and to encourage the development of local initiatives supporting the general social integration, and to prevent the marginalisation of seniors.

Basic computer and internet skills training course constituted an essential element of the project; its organisation was up to the students and graduates of pedagogics from Stowarzyszenie AVEC (AVEC Association). The course was complemented by an English language course focusing on the vocabulary necessary to use computers.

Although not all of the scheduled classes took place eventually, the aim was achieved (self-education with the use of the provided teaching materials that all of the participants received proved to be a good idea). Physical activities were organised, as well; these were an introduction to the basic exercises activating this age group and relaxing exercises connected with using computers. These were organised by the employees of the University School of Physical Education in Wrocław, with the use of the hitherto cooperation of the University of the Third Age with this School. The classes focused on proper breathing practice and relaxing activities complemented with Nordic Walking. The physical activities were preceded by medical examinations. The memory of the participants of the training courses was examined, as well. On the basis of the medical examinations referrals for further specialist consultations were provided for those who needed them.

The complementary programme included participation in classes related to selected aspects of andragogical, philosophical, and gerontological knowledge as well as computer skills. The participants of the project attended biographical and genealogical workshops. The seminar on the quality of life of seniors that constituted a search for the predictors of good ageing included the subject of intergenerational relationships, as well. The reading and media education at the district library generated great interest, with the establishment of the "Wakacyjne Koło Fotografii Cyfrowej" (the holiday club of digital photography) as its result. The "Spotkanie z Seniorem" (meeting with seniors) series was aimed at realising the importance of one's own interests, the continuation of which is a source of satisfaction in the period of late adulthood.

The programme was evaluated by the participants of the courses with the use of a specially drawn up survey.

The aims and objectives of the project were compatible with the strategic goals of the "Strategia Wrocław w perspektywie 2020 plus"¹⁾ (strategy – Wrocław in the 2020 plus perspective) in many of the areas defined therein, such as the methodological suppositions – increasing the importance of social capital and seeking and dissemination of innovative solutions. In the people, life, and health field the aforementioned compatibility was realised in the proposed holistic approach to an individual in health policy, the promotion of responsible lifestyle, and teaching about the negative consequences of living irresponsibly. In relation to the implementation of the aims of the health policy the knowledge of how to live healthily and of prophylactics was promoted, and in the area of social assistance – through the creation of conditions necessary for the development of activity and self-reliance of seniors, especially supporting the self-help-related forms of activation and the endeavours aimed at helping the seniors. The problem of the self-exclusion of the seniors was addressed, and measures to prevent the exclusion in civilisation and social aspects caused by the lack of computer use skills were undertaken with utmost dedication.

¹⁾ http://bip.um.wroc.pl/wps/wcm/connect/398102804280289a965bd796e258c1d9/strategia_pl.pdf?MOD=AJPERES, retrieved: 12.12.2008 r.

The fact of the inclusion of the educational programme in the relatively wide scope of strategic aims of social development may serve to exemplify their rightness.

During the preparation of the project the idea to select the beneficiaries with the help of the local clinic proved to be correct. Such an entity is generally trusted, which allows the organisers of the projects to appear reliable. It also draws the attention of doctors to the new prophylactic of people whose health is to be understood as physical, emotional, and social well-being.

The programme is presented in the chart.

Chart 1. Programme of the @ktywny Senior project

	Types of activities	For 1 group
1	Computer and internet skills training	30
2	Physical culture, physical and health education - theory	13
3	Practical physical activities	12
4	Learning from life and one's own biography	4
5	The philosophy of human beings	10
6	Quality of life of seniors	4
7	Constructing group communication	6
8	Educational relationships – „parents, grandparents, grandchildren”	1
9	Reading and media education	2
10	English language	1
11	Seniors' meetings with interests	4
12	Information on osteoporosis	1
13	The modern bank with its internet services	2
	TOTAL	90

Source: Developed by the leading entities.

Organisation of the project was carried out according to the objectives prepared earlier and it has gained the support of the beneficiaries. In the longer perspective it is assumed that on the basis of the experiences related to the implementation of the project it will constitute a model of Wrocław-based educational initiative aimed at seniors to be described and repeated. The structure of the project will allow for its implementation in certain conditions, in any place, by any entity interested, and in the scope tailored to the local needs and opportunities.

Definition of the objectives of the organisation of the "Centrum szkoleniowe dla liderów i instruktorów projektu przy Centrum Sektor3" (the training centre for project leaders and instructors at the Centrum Sektor 3) on the basis of the project ought to be established, which would constitute a location where the future teachers would gain knowledge and practice on the basis of the results and experiences connected with the discussed project.

The results of the works were included in the schedule of the XII Lower Silesian Science Festival under the title: "Senior – aktywny Człowiek, Obywatel, Wrocławianin" (seniors – active people, citizens, and inhabitants of Wrocław).

An ongoing promotional campaign serves to constantly provide information on the project that implements gerontological prophylactics as well as social activation of seniors outside the hitherto prevalent standards along with the construction of social capital with the participation of seniors. Such attitude was not present previously.

The methods of work, in relation to the training courses as well as the supplementary activities were based on university standards. The classes were mostly conducted with the use of higher education means and forms – lectures, seminars, and workshops. The rule of feedback was also taken into account, and it was realised through the evaluation of the project by its participants.

The budget of the project was planned correctly and the final balance turned out as expected; however, it was in 97% hypothetical, as the assumed costs were not, in fact, spent, because of the voluntary work of the teachers and instructors. The project had minor financial support from two sponsors – the BZWBK and DnB NORD banks.

The dissemination of computer knowledge through the beneficiaries' acquisition of basic computer and internet use skills, including starting an email account, starting a bank account and using electronic banking, learning to use the information related to city transport, buses, and trains schedules, and making appointments in the clinic via the internet were the results of the implemented project.

The effects of crucial importance were those related to physical activity, in the broad sense of the word. Here the beneficiaries gained knowledge of their health, learned to do a number of physical exercises aimed at improving their basic physical fitness, they learned about the importance of physical activity in prophylactics and treatment of cancer, as well as the idea of healing through movement. During the physical training tailored for people of advanced age the seniors had an opportunity to get to know and practice Nordic Walking and relaxation techniques and they gained knowledge about learning to keep balance, to prevent falling over, of breathing exercises and general fitness exercises.

Psychological problems of people of advanced aged needed to be emphasised. The problems were not only addressed, but also attempts at solving them were made. Group integration allowed for an establishment of neighbourhood relationships and setting up a network of cooperation between the beneficiaries.

Choosing the Centrum Sektor 3 location turned out right because of a number of reasons. Optimal conditions were created there, for group work as well as individual practice (sufficient number of computer desks).

The team of organisers-teachers was made up of employees of higher schools, students, voluntary workers, and doctoral studies students. The interdisciplinary staff included a doctor, a specialist in andragogics, a psychologist, a sociologist,

a philosophy scholar, a language teacher, a computer technician, a rehabilitation specialist, a lawyer, a bank employee, and an economist.

Conclusions

The organisers were convinced that it would be possible to establish contacts with the Powiatowe Biuro Pracy (district employment agency). Unfortunately, the agency does not deal with such issues and it was clearly surprised by our proposition. This proves that in the future it must be attempted to solve the problem in a different way, perhaps with the help of non-governmental organisations. The grant application submitted to the Urząd Miasta Wrocławia (Wrocław city office) was rejected by the local government officials responsible for the social policy related to seniors.

The assumed final effect was an integration of inhabitants of the district expressed through the establishment of the "Popowiczanie" association. Analysis of the evaluation survey suggests that the beneficiaries were unanimous in their positive assessment of the programme of the project.

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Information about the partners and organisers of the *@ktywny Senior* project

- I. Fundacja Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych Umbrella (non-governmental organisations support foundation Umbrella) and Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych Sektor3 (non-governmental organisations support centre Sektor 3)



While realising the aims appointed by the Wrocław borough in 2007 the "Umbrella" foundation was established and has been managing the Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych Sektor3 (non-governmental organisations support centre Sektor 3) ever since (the objective is to be continued until 2012). As part of this project cooperation with over 200 non-governmental organisations was started, which makes it stronger and broadens the contacts with their leaders and the area of social problems that these organisations attempt to solve. The help that has been provided to Wrocław-based NGOs and informal groups mostly consists in counselling, training courses, and access to resources (class rooms, equipment). These activities allow for a broader participation of the staff and partners of the foundation in various projects organised by the city, the European Union, and other international organisations.

The foundation was active as one of the organisers of the *@ktywny Senior* project aimed at the inhabitants of the Popowice district of Wrocław; the objective of the project was to increase the mobility, social, physical, and professional activity of seniors (people of over 60 years of age) and to encourage the development of local initiatives supporting the general social integration, and to prevent the marginalisation

of seniors. As part of the project the Centrum Sektor 3 participated in the multiple editions of the computer skills training course for seniors [PZERI Oddz. Fabryczna (the national association of the retired, the handicapped, and the recipients of social insurance aid – Fabryczna district division), Polskie Towarzystwo Laryngektomowanych (the national association of laryngectomees), the N@stor Project], a series of integration meetings for local organisations and community "Spotkania z kulturą naszych sąsiadów" (meetings with the culture of our neighbours), "Targi Organizacji Pozarządowych" (NGOs fair), etc. Centrum Sektor 3 is also a place where various student internships are organised; a place where voluntary workers are active. The foundation participated in a social employment programme for the long-time unemployed organised by MOPS (the city social assistance centre) and an employment agency, accepting for a traineeship and subsequently employing 2 people.

The "Umbrella" foundation as the entity managing Centrum Sektor 3 is commonly associated with this location which provides the means necessary to conduct the @ktywny Senior project. The 650 m² building at Legnicka street 65 has an open space office rooms on two levels with 15 desks and the necessary furniture, computers with state-of-the-art programmes, telephones, computer lab with 10 computer desks, an air-conditioned conference room with space for 80 people, mobile training rooms with 30, 20, or 50 places, and a consultation room, where up to 10 people can work. We offer access to a fax machine, printers, copiers, multimedia projectors, laptops, digital voice recorders, and flipcharts. The availability of a recreational room and a kitchen should also be mentioned. The building has constituted a base for the realisation of all the training courses specified in the project. It is accessible for the handicapped. There are 50 parking spaces in front of the building. The location is easily accessible by means of public transport from all points in the Fabryczna district.

Centrum Sektor 3 is well-known and valued by the local community, by government agencies as well as the inhabitants of the Popowice and Gądów Mały districts.

II. Ogólnopolskie Stowarzyszenie Na Rzecz Rozwoju Otwartej Opieki Zdrowotnej "Nova-Med" (the Polish association for the development of open healthcare "Nova Med")



Ogólnopolskie Stowarzyszenie Na Rzecz Rozwoju Otwartej Opieki Zdrowotnej "Nova-Med" (the Polish association for the development of open healthcare "Nova Med") is located in Wrocław at Legnicka street 6.

The aim of the association is to support the development of open healthcare, including individuals, organisations and methods of work ensuring an improvement of health of the society.

Researchers from higher schools in Wrocław, entrepreneurs, and doctors are the members of the association.

The statutory aims of the association are implemented through:

- A. Integration of the local business community and professionals – the practitioners and scientists of numerous fields - around the common objectives related to open healthcare,
- B. Establishment, promotion, evaluation, and improvement of standards connected with open healthcare activity,
- C. Educational initiatives in the field of medical knowledge and management skills in the form of meetings, training courses, seminars, conferences, traineeships, development programmes, and other forms of education,
- D. Creating and making available of modern IT tools and techniques supporting the functioning of individuals and organisations,
- E. Organising trips and missions for its members aimed at exchange of experiences in Europe and the rest of the world as well as implementation of regional, national, and international projects.

The association is a partner of Stowarzyszenie AVEC (AVEC association) in carrying out the promotion of the @ktywny Senior project as a good practice; it participates in the Lifelong Learning Programme constituting a part of the Grundtvig "Seniors' integration through education" programme organised by the European Union as well as the "Grants 2010" competition announced for the members of the Stowarzyszenie Zdrowych Miast Polskich (association of healthy Polish cities).

III. University of the Third Age at the University of Wrocław



Uniwersytet
Wrocławski

Uniwersytet
Trzeciego
Wiek

The University of the Third Age cooperates with the Wrocław Medical University and the University School of Physical Education in Wrocław in the area of medicine and physical activity of seniors, as well as with numerous other organisations and institutions whose aim is the dissemination of the activation of seniors, such as the Institute of Pedagogics of the University of Wrocław, the Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Dolnośląskiego (the marshal Office of the Lower Silesian voivodship), primary schools, local politicians, the interdisciplinary science club "Variograf" and the AVEC association.

The life of the students is organised by the self-government which maintains contact with the managing board of the U3A and consults the most important decisions with it. Anyone over 60 years of age who is not professionally active (the retired, the beneficiaries of social assistance) can become a student of the University of the Third Age, regardless of the level of education, if only there are free places available. One can remain a student for many years. The student recruitment process confirming a participation in the classes in the consecutive academic year takes place in the second half of September. Owners of the U3A student cards have the places reserved for them. In the academic year 2003/2004 550 people signed up and 30 joined after the preliminary interviews. In 2006/2007 there were approximately 2 people for each place available (about 60 people were admitted), in the year 2007/2008 about 3 candidates for each place (about 100 students were admitted), 75 people were admitted for the academic year 2008/2009, and about 80 joined the year 2009/2010. Currently the U3A has 750 students. Since 2008 the U3A has been active on an international scale, and since 2007 it has been a member of the European Federation of Older Students, in 2008 close relationships with the Senior Councils of Hanover and Wolfsburg were established, and the year 2010 marked the beginning of two projects – starting a U3A in Lviv (in cooperation of the managing boards of the local higher schools – the university of technology, the higher music school, the public university, the Roman Catholic university, the physical education university) and the university of the golden age in Grodno¹⁾.

IV. Stowarzyszenie AVEC (AVEC Association)



Stowarzyszenie AVEC is an association of young scientists who organise educational projects aimed at diverse social groups and support student initiatives, in the broad sense of the term. It was established as a reaction to the student initiative consisting in organising holiday recreation for children from the Kłobuck orphanage. Students of the Institute of Pedagogics at the University of Wrocław were full of energy and enthusiasm, but they lacked an organisational and legal form necessary to allow them to be active. Many of them realised their scientific interests as members of the interdisciplinary science club "Variograf"; however, with graduation it became obligatory for them to cease their formal participation in "Variograf". Therefore,

¹⁾ <http://www.utw.wroclaw.pl/index.php?q=node/10>, retrieved: 07.06.2011.

a decision was made to shape the real world according to our needs and to create a community that could transgress the limits of the university without losing its scientific and research-oriented character.

The aims of the AVEC association are first and foremost a broad activity in promotion and dissemination of the idea of lifelong learning and improving the quality of life of local communities. Actions are undertaken to promote employment and to reduce the effects of unemployment. The aim of the association is the activation of social groups, help and support for the families at risk of social exclusion and marginalisation.

AVEC also supports seniors in order to improve the quality of their participation in the society. The developed programme of education of seniors allows them to become aware of their value and usefulness in contemporary society.

With promotion of science in mind, the AVEC association supports the scientific activity of students and graduates, allowing them to acquire practical knowledge and skills related to the functioning of non-governmental organisations, and provides opportunities of cooperation in numerous projects. The association organises student traineeships in adult education and the organisation of education and regional education.

The aims of the AVEC association are implemented on the basis of the participation in meetings, workshops, and conferences. It is made possible for the interested to take part in all forms of individual development related to the activity of the association.

Currently the AVEC association cooperates with the University of the Third Age at the University of Wrocław, the „Aktywny Senior” foundation (formerly the „Nova-Med” association), the „Umbrella” foundation and the Centrum Sektor 3.

V. Centrum Medyczne (medical centre) Wejherowska



Centrum Medyczne (medical centre) Wejherowska is one of the three medical centres constituting the NZOZ (non-public health care facility) „Zawidawie”. It provides general and specialist care for patients of the Fabryczna district of Wrocław, mainly from the areas of Popowice, Kozanów, Gądów, and Kosmonautów.

The NZOZ „Zawidawie” had been developing its activity in Wrocław for the last ten years, also in the Psie Pole district and Osiedle Zakrzów. It provides its patients with medical care of high standard. A wide range of medical services is provided in its centres – from diagnostic examinations, through occupational

medicine, consultations with GPs and specialists, prophylactic examinations, ambulance services, dentist practices and endoscopy. Its medical staff is highly qualified, friendly and open to the needs of the patients.

VI. Fundacja Aktywny Senior (Aktywny Senior Foundation)



Fundacja Aktywny Senior (Aktywny Senior Foundation) was established in June this year in order to fulfil the needs of the ageing society. The Aktywny Senior foundation „took over” this area that was formerly developed by Ogólnopolskie Stowarzyszenie Na Rzecz Rozwoju Otwartej Opieki Zdrowotnej „Nova-Med” (the Polish association for the development of open healthcare “Nova Med”). The aims of the foundation, such as promotion of continued education of professionally active people, support of economic development – including entrepreneurship – supporting the development of local communities, and promotion and organisation of voluntary work could not be contained in the statutory aims of that association. That is why a new entity was established; a one aimed at the activation of adults, in the broad sense of the term, with professional activation as its essential element, promotion and organisation of voluntary work and improvement of the quality of life. The formerly formed methods of work will be a part of the activities of the foundation; these were based on cooperation with the University of Wrocław, the Wrocław Medical University, the University School of Physical Education in Wrocław, Wrocław University of Environmental and Life Sciences, and non-governmental organisations such as the „Umbrella” foundation, the AVEC association, and the CEBS association. This model of partnership allowed for the implementation of the pilot project which resulted in the development of the programme of the *@ktywny Senior*. It was organised in the borough centre for non-governmental organisations in Wrocław understood as cooperation with government institutions. The total cost of the project was 73,333 PLN. As good practice, it was granted the support of the Grundtvig “Seniors’ integration through education” programme and was realised in cooperation with 5 European members of the CEBS association and the Aktywny Senior foundation. The programme of the *@ktywny Senior* project was used in the „Grants 2010” competition announced for the members of the Stowarzyszenie Zdrowych Miast Polskich (association of healthy Polish cities) as the Wrocław educational programme titled “Przestrzeń miejska przyjazna dla zdrowia mieszkańców” (city space beneficial to the health of its inhabitants). The total cost of the project was 22,940 PLN with a 3,000 PLN grant from the Stowarzyszenie Zdrowych Miast Polskich.

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