

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE (U3A): UKRAINIAN AND POLISH EXPERIENCE

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In the conditions of European integration of Ukraine gerontology and andragogics problems existing in the country require better analysis and studying. Some aspects of these problems, such as lifelong education and population ageing, are connected with education. The significance of these problems is confirmed by the fact that European Parliament and the Council declared 2012 as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. Lifelong education for all has become a slogan that governments use for election purposes, but the reality is different. Very few countries have included older people in their national policies for lifelong learning [4].

The need to involve people of pre-retirement and retirement age to the educational process is caused by the number of socio-demographic backgrounds. According to demographic projections, in Ukraine, to 2025, per one employee-citizen of Ukraine should be one pensioner and for the normal functioning of the state, according to scientists, per one elderly person should be from six to ten able-bodied citizens. In many countries, up to 80% of the adult population is surrounded by various forms of education as well as Ukraine, it is only 28% [1].

Serious theoretical understanding of the nature and role of the elderly education began in Europe since the mid-1970s. The first U3A, L'Université du Troisième Age, was developed in Toulouse in 1972 to improve the quality of life for older adults. The university faculty, on traditional campuses, conducted courses for third age students [3;4]. Main objectives of the first U3A were: enabling lifelong learning for older people; educating students in the field of social gerontology; preparation of specialists working for elderly people; as well as conducting research on medical, legal and psycho-social issues old-age [5]. Polish Alina Schwarz University for studying people of the third age was founded in 1975 and became one of the first in Europe. At the time of its opening in the university, there were 323 people, and in the 2003/2004 academic year, the number of students was already 1,254 people. Today in Poland operates 22 U3A, and in recent years, the country is planning to establish the Federation of Polish U3A. Today in Poland training activities focus around such problem areas as: literary, plastic, tourist, recreation, psychotherapy, etc. University study program

provides four foreign languages studying. In Polish U3A distinguish several educational learning objectives: preventing old age; preparation for retirement; preparation for social activities [2;3].

To the opinion of L. Hebenstreit: “Researchers have used the terms elderly, seniors, the young-old, the old-old, and retirees, with no clear definition of these terms” [4]. And A. Klimczuk underlines that U3A use the imprecise “third age” (persons between 60 and 74 years) term and run political economy which is limiting satisfying different needs of the “fourth age” representatives. Meanwhile “fourth age”, otherwise “old-old”, are persons in 75-89 years age group, requiring support of others, and more likely to have disabilities, Parkinson’s disease and Alzheimer’s [5].

It should be noted that today U3A are already functioning in several cities of Ukraine (Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, Ternopil, Sumy, Zhytomyr, Shostka, Uman, Cherkassy, etc.). There is no U3A in Poltava, but adult people can use here the social-pedagogical service “U3A” in the local centers of social service.

So, in Ukraine at the moment U3A are represented only in some cities and can not provide all population of the third age with education of good quality. Poland successfully implements the ideas of lifelong learning in the EU area and should be used by us as the good example. U3A should not exist only in the form of services and applications in Ukraine, they must functionate separately and are available to provide qualitative educational services in all regions of Ukraine, including Poltava.

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