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THE THIRD AGE UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF ACTIVE AGEING CONCEPT

Abstract. *The article deals with the problem of the development of the Third Age Universities (U3As) system as realization of the lifelong learning strategy in the rapid aging world. The U3As are spreading widely around the world, and has a huge perspective and demand in Ukraine, considering that, according to a WHO study, Ukraine ranks first in the world in the prevalence of depression among people including seniors. It is noted that creating of the Third Age Universities is based on the concept of active ageing that is helping people stay in charge of their own lives for as long as possible as they age and, where possible, to contribute to the economy and society; it is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security for the elderly. «Active» means continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just physically activeness or participation in the labour force. The article outlines that the U3As are important to eliminate loneliness prevent isolation and falling into a depression for the elderly, to improve their quality of life. The latest includes socio-economic side that is primarily the material conditions of life, standards of health and social services, participating in cultural and social life of the community (museums, universities, libraries, and sports) and educational opportunities; the second side is psychological conceptualization of quality of life that is some individual view to satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life. The author analyses the dominant U3A models adopted, the French and British approaches. The original French model required U3As to be associated with traditional university systems; in contrast the British model is largely of a self-help kind with little or no support from external sources. Analysis of the world practice has shown that the development of U3As depends largely on governments and public institutions at the national, regional and local levels ensuring the sustainability of the U3As. This work has three dimensions that have proved their effective results: the law and regulations for elderly education, financial injection for elderly education from the government, implementation of the efficient management and coordination means.*

Key words: *lifelong learning; the Third Age University; seniors; the elderly; active ageing; adult education.*

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УНІВЕРСИТЕТИ ТРЕТЬОГО ВІКУ В КОНТЕКСТІ КОНЦЕПЦІЇ АКТИВНОГО СТАРІННЯ

Анотація. *Стаття присвячена проблемі розвитку університетів третього віку (УЗВ) як реалізації стратегії навчання впродовж життя з урахуванням швидкого старіння населення. УЗВ поширилися по всьому світу, мають значну роль і попит в Україні, оскільки, згідно з дослідженням ВООЗ, Україна посідає перше місце в світі за поширеністю депресії, зокрема серед людей похилого віку. Зазначається, що створення університетів третього віку базується на концепції активного старіння, яка забезпечує процес оптимізації можливостей для здоров'я та безпеки літніх людей, допомагає людям старшого віку залишатися відповідальними за своє життя як найдовше і робити посильний внесок в економіку та суспільство. «Активний» означає постійну участь у соціальних, економічних, культурних, духовних і громадських справах, а не лише фізичну активність чи професійну задіяність. У статті наголошується, що УЗВ важливі для усунення самотності, запобігання ізоляції та депресії літніх людей, для покращення якості їх життя. Останнє включає соціально-економічний фактор, що полягає у матеріальних умовах життя, стандартах медичних і соціальних послуг, участі в культурному та соціальному житті громади (музеї, університети, бібліотеки та спорт) та освітніх можливостях; з іншого боку, це психологічна концептуалізація якості життя, індивідуальний погляд на задоволеність чи незадоволеність життям. Автор аналізує домінуючі у світі моделі університетів третього віку – французьку та британську. Відповідно до французького підходу, УЗВ пов'язані з традиційними системами університетів і коледжів; водночас британська модель передбачає самопомогу та взаємонавчання з незначною підтримкою або без неї з боку зовнішніх джерел. Аналіз світової практики засвідчив, що розвиток УЗВ залежить від залучення урядових і громадських інституцій на національному, регіональному та місцевому рівнях до розвитку університетів третього віку. Така робота у трьох напрямках довела ефективність результатів системи УЗВ, а саме: законодавчі та нормативні акти щодо освіти літніх людей; фінансова допомога з боку урядових та інших організацій; упровадження дієвого управління та координації.*

Ключові слова: *навчання впродовж життя; університет третього віку; люди похилого віку; активне старіння; освіта дорослих.*

Problem statement and its rationale. Learning is something that needs to be done through-out life because it is an investment. The Lifelong

Learning (LLL) strategy lays the foundation for learning throughout life and the directions for remaining active include being optimistic, proactive and continue to learn. At all life stages, active and healthy individuals feel connected to others and relevant in the family and community; with energy and good health people of all ages can make positive contributions and learn, can continue to grow as individuals. In the modern fast ageing world older people will increasingly play a critical role through transmitting experience and knowledge, helping their families with caring responsibilities and increasing their participation in the paid labour force or volunteer work. So, there is a strong need for intergenerational co-operation that will bring together both the elderly and the youth for productive engagements. Unfortunately, there is a lack of political will, and the situation is so poor because of corruption, discrimination, non-inclusion and others in many countries.

That is why, in recent years, the numerous international communities gave increasing recognition that older people would themselves play the main role in securing their own wellbeing, in proclaiming their worth, in developing their independence while integrated in the society. From the latest surveys, older persons like to be active and healthy and be independent to do what they like and not depending on others, to exist and be part of the communities they find themselves, that appreciate their wisdom and contributions. The importance of the promotion of sustainable peace through education, culture and languages as a part of the efforts to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eradicate poverty by 2030 was highlighted in «The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development», adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 (The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015). This task is realized through the system of Universities of the Third Age (U3As) that is spreading widely around the world, and has a huge perspective and demand in Ukraine, especially considering that, according to a study by the World Health Organization, Ukraine ranks first in the world in the prevalence of depression among people of retirement age (Active ageing). The experts note that education is one of the most effective means for preventing depression in the elderly. Participation in the educational process helps a person keep up with the times, train memory, and develop intelligence.

Analysis of the recent publications. The problem of development of the elderly people learning and education as well as creating and functioning of the Third Age Universities is currently a popular issue in the context of lifelong and adult education; it is the subject of study by many domestic and foreign scientists and practitioners. The grounds for the research of the Third Age Universities phenomenon were laid by scientific works on lifelong learning of R. Manheimer, J. Field, C. Hayes and others, on adult education by

L. Lukyanova, N. Nychkalo, O. Anishchenko, S. Brookfield, R. Caffarella, K. Cross, P. Jarvis, M. Knowles, S. Merriam. A significant influence on the formation of scientific approaches in given sphere had: the works on education of the elderly by D. Battersby, C. James, P. Laslett, D. Peterson, W. Sadler, R. Swindell, A. Zych and others. There were determined the psychological basis of education of the older age people by A. Leaders, A. Rean, E. Erikson, D. Katz, J. Kohen, E. Schneider, etc. Scholars N. Lomakina, C. Handy, M. Formosa and others identified the features of education of the elderly; such researches as A. Carle, J. Cowdell, D. Martin, J. Thompson, R. Fischer, etc. raised the problems on organization of education institutes for the pensioners and the functioning of Universities of the Third Age. So, the presence of a significant amount of research literature investigating the various aspects of the aged education development proves that the issue of the U3As is currently in demand and requires immediate solution.

Therefore, **the purpose of the study** is to characterize the development of the Third Age Universities system on the basis of the world experience, to consider the historical aspect according the French and British models of the U3As, and to analyze the theoretical concept of active ageing as a ground for the U3As system. The article tries to explain the idea behind Universities of the Third Age as an unquestioned need to support seniors in education and adaptation to old age, and to reveal peculiarities of the of state government and other institutions to maintenance this system.

Presentation of the basic material. The Universities of the Third Age is an international initiative promoting lifelong learning. They are educational institutions for adults whose program offers are targeted at seniors. Universities of the Third Age were established in response to rapid socio-demographic changes in society. They are part of the lifelong learning concept, where education is regarded as a process enabling seniors to develop comprehensively, manage their own lives, be active in late adulthood, and develop and broaden their interests (Rynkowska, 2020).

According to R. Swindell & J. Thompson (1995), the University of the Third Age is a highly successful adult education movement providing opportunities for older adults to enjoy a range of activities associated with well-being in later life. The nationwide network of learning groups is aimed at encouraging older people to share their knowledge, skills and interests in a friendly environment. This LLL programs provide non-professional education and intended for senior citizens.

Development of the Third Age Universities is based on *the concept of active ageing*. Active ageing is defined by the European Commission as «helping people stay in charge of their own lives for as long as possible as they

age and, where possible, to contribute to the economy and society» (Active ageing). It is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age. It applies to both individuals and population groups. Active ageing allows people to realize their potential for physical, social, and mental well-being throughout the life course and to participate in society, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care when they need. It is necessary in today's civilized society to search for, and offer to the older the adequate programs for active aging.

Someone, who was accustomed during his life to satisfy his individual requirements, usually continues in the same activities, thus the U3As are important to eliminate loneliness, prevent isolation for the elderly, to improve their quality of life, and prevents them from falling into a depression. The results of scientific surveys clearly confirm improving the quality of life by participation in learning. Although aging makes differences between desire and reality, it is in the power of the person to accept reality and try to satisfy and fulfill own life, to become qualitative for him. *Socio-economic concepts of quality of life* focus primarily on the material conditions of life, the indicators of which are income and expenditure, quality and standard of housing, household amenities, and education. These include such issues as standards of health and social services, the proportion of individuals in the cultural and social life of the community (museums, universities, libraries, and sports) and educational opportunities. *Psychological conceptualization of quality of life* sees the quality of life by some individual view of people to their own satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life. So, U3As and lifelong learning are the possibilities how increase the quality of life. Leisure activities fulfilled by learning can be considered as a factor retarding the beginning of involutory changes and increasing in most cases the quality of life (Hrapkova, 2019).

Lifelong learning through the U3As system is a means of socialization and coping with aging. It is understood as preventing social isolation of seniors, the possibility of carrying out own life goals. The word «active» refers to continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labour force. Education and participation in programs designed for seniors gives participants: the chance of integration into society, the opportunity to pass on their own experience, the ability to use them for the society and in their own environment within the family, friends, clubs or between pensioners, opportunities for self-realization and participation in the life of society (Hrapkova, 2019). Apart from that, LLL helps to: cope better with everyday life; be able to live independently as long as possible; understand technical progress (new media, PC, mobile phone); develop oneself; continue in active involvement in social life; have a

say, especially with young generation (children, grandchildren); understand globalization, to gain information (especially about politics and society); maintain one's mental health and curiosity; maintain exchanges with others, meet interesting people.

It should be said, that there is no universally accepted model for the U3As. Two substantially different approaches, the French approach, and British approach which evolved for the last decades, have become the dominant U3A models adopted by a number of countries. The original French model required U3As to be associated with traditional university systems. In contrast the British model, which developed some years later, is largely of a self-help kind with little or no support from external sources (Swindell & Thompson, 1995).

The French Model. In France in 1968 legislation requiring universities to provide more community education was passed, and in 1973 the first Third Age University was established by Prof. Pierre Vellas on the base of highly rated gerontology course, run by Toulouse University of Social Sciences exclusively for local retired people. The U3A was open to anyone over retirement age; no qualifications or examinations were required or offered, and fees were kept to a minimum. By 1975 the idea had spread to other French and European universities and across the Atlantic. By the late 1970s, the original focus on older people by universities has broadened to include other educationally disadvantaged groups: early retirees, housewives, the unemployed and the disabled. Courses vary widely in content (mainly in humanities and arts), style of presentation and format including open lectures, negotiated access to university or contracted courses, study groups, workshops, excursions and physical health programs. Funding also varies considerably. Some U3As are largely university funded; some are funded by a combination of fees, donations, and financial subsidy from the local township; and some are mainly member-funded (Radcliffe, 1982).

The British Model. U3A underwent a substantial change when it reached Cambridge in 1981. According to the founders of the British model, there was to be no distinction between the teachers and the taught (Laslett, 1989). Members would be the teachers as well as the learners and, where possible, members should engage in research activities. The «self-help» ideal was based on the knowledge that experts of every kind retire, thus, there should be no need for paid or unpaid second age teachers. The self-help approach has been highly successful in Britain as well as in Australia and New Zealand. Some of the strengths of the approach include: minimal membership fees; accessible classes run in community halls, libraries, private homes, schools etc.; flexible timetables and negotiable curriculum and teaching styles; wide course variety ranging from the highly academic to arts, crafts and physical activity; no

academic constraints such as entrance requirements or examinations. Each U3A is independent and is run by a democratically elected management committee of members (Swindell & Thompson, 1995). Other approaches, which incorporate some of the features of each of these «parent» models, have evolved to suit local conditions.

A fundamental aspect for the development of the Third Age Universities is institutions, as it is confirmed in many studies. The U3As is a focal point for the public and private sectors concerning lifelong learning. The commitment of public institutions at the national, regional and local levels is the basis for ensuring the sustainability of U3As around the world. The Third Age Universities, or Elderly universities, can become a remarkable phenomenon in every society if the government leads the operation and management and play the leading role in their promoting. As the world practice shows, development of U3As depends largely on governments at various levels, which provide the elderly education as a public service, because official agencies for organization, education, culture and civil affairs are directly involved in the operation work. This work has three dimensions that have proved their effective results in massive Elderly universities system in China (Shi, 2018).

1. First, the government has to provide the law and regulations for elderly education. The state advances elderly education, bringing it into the lifelong learning system as well as encouraging the society to run U3As of various kinds. Governments of all levels should strengthen their leading role, make concerted planning and enhance their input, thus making elderly education a true element of national will and systems.

2. Second, financial injection for elderly education from the government are appropriated by local authorities for administrative spending, construction of facilities, purchase of equipment and hiring of teachers; funding at regional level are included in the budget of educational authority.

3. Third, the management and coordination means that a state managing system takes the lead, governments coordinate, agencies for education, civil affairs, culture collaborate, while other agencies take part. All departments are expected to fulfill their respective duties and, through planning, deliberation and oversight, work together to solve the problems arising in the course of work.

Therefore, because of that many people are living to old age, policy decisions are needed if quality of life in old age is to be improved, as well as the issues affecting the senior citizens must be raised by the governments and other concerned bodies making policy decisions. Unfortunately, institutions like the governments, religious bodies, non-governmental organizations, universities and colleges etc. are not making the mark because of socio-economic

problems; and many senior citizens are experiencing poverty, isolation, inadequate health and malnutrition.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. Rapid ageing leads to huge transformations in many areas of life – politics, economy, culture, care services, and among others – education. Active lifestyle, education and better quality of care will undoubtedly improve the health and well-being of seniors. The growing population of elderly people necessitates the development of a new vision on the functioning of seniors and their social roles in the transforming social reality. As aging significantly affects the lives of everyone, on one side, there is the standard of attention and interest of the state, but on the other side it is on the individuals themselves, how they can influence the process of aging and old age. One effective platform for the activity and cooperation of older people involves Universities of the Third Age. Two dominant but substantially different U3As models, the French and British approaches, have been adopted globally and proved their effective results.

Due to that a large amount of people are living to old age, the quality of life and social engagement of the seniors are to be improved, therefore the policy decisions and practical measures are needed to be made by the governments and other concerned bodies like NGOs, religious institutions, etc. in three directions: the law and regulations for elderly education, financial injections from the government, the management and coordination means by a state managing system to fulfill their respective duties. There must be initiative and development of appropriate curricular and training programs on ageing through co-operation with universities and research institutions. Gerontologists, stakeholders, care givers, politicians, students must be encouraged to attend workshops, conferences, seminars and the like around the world as far as ageing issues are counted worthy and concerned in the world at large, as well as in Ukraine. Besides, the U3As around the world must co-operate for exchange of ideas and information about lifelong learning and other projects. These and other theoretical and applied research on the problem can be regarded as *the prospects for further scientific research*.

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