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**ADDITIONAL EDUCATION OF THE THIRD AGE AT THE  
UNIVERSITY**

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### Abstract

One of the priorities of the university in solving the problems of the regional development is the training of educators for the implementation of additional education programs. The current demographic and social situation requires conditions for expanding the range of educational programs for the older people. The university, acting as a centre of regional educational policy, has special potential and resources for developing the concept of continuing education for third age people. The article describes the experience of collaboration between the University of the Third Age and a regional classical university by the example of a program of additional education in foreign languages. Particular attention is paid to the training of teachers for the organization of additional adult education. The idea of the third age education is the positive development of potential of older people. The observations show that people have increased levels of knowledge, experience, and intelligence. The educational process based on the principle of a student's systematic learning and development has created the conditions for the development of the ability to self-study and comprehension of the new in the process of practical activity. The experience of collaboration between a higher education institution and a third-age university has proved to be an effective form of mobilizing society's resources for social interaction and creating various forms of education.

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## 1. Introduction

According to the World Economic Forum, by 2050, the number of people aged 60 in developed countries will grow to 32%; by 2021, according to Rosstat, the share of elderly citizens in the total population of Russia will be 26.7% (39.5 million people). Today, the face of an elderly person is changing: this person is active, sociable, and open to changes. Nowadays, the term “third age” has mostly replaced the terms “oldness” and “old age” in the research literature. One of the problems of sociology, psychology, pedagogy today is to define old age. The World Health Organization defines a person aged from 60 to 75 years as an elderly person, from 77 to 90 years as an old person, with the onset of 90 years of age, a period of longevity begins (World Report on Aging and Health, 2015). The concept, which appeared in the 1950s, introduces the concept of third age, according to which third age is the period of life of an elderly person who has retired and leads an active lifestyle. In connection with the improvement in the quality of life, the increase in life expectancy, representatives of the third age constitute a new age group of the so-called ‘young old people’, thus creating a new image of an elderly person (Formosa, 2019). Aarsal (2018) emphasizes that, according to the European Commission, adult education and lifelong learning should play a key role in the policy of competitiveness and employment opportunities, social inclusion, and active citizenship. According to Teodorescu (2018), development is a multifaceted concept, covering such areas as economic, social, political, cultural, scientific, environmental, and human; development means a qualitative life improvement.

## 2. Problem Statement

According to the 2018 survey on satisfaction with the quality of life conducted by VCIOM and the international pharmaceutical company Bayer, 85% of respondents noted that to stay active and maintain health, the pensioners over 60 should make great efforts. 76% of the respondents reported health problems. At the same time, 78% of respondents believe that retirement due to old age is not an obstacle to an active lifestyle. However, 60% of respondents aged 60 and over indicate difficulties in learning and retraining, although the majority of respondents expressed a desire to learn something new, and 46% noted the importance of continuing their professional activity (Issledovaniye Bayer Barometr, 2018). An important factor in the success of professional activity and personal life for older people can be the creating of a comfortable educational environment, which, according to Karavanova et al. (2019) promotes effective interpersonal interaction, emotional well-being, forms value orientations of the project participants, helps their acquisition of additional professions and inclusion in the activities of socially significant organizations.

In Russia, Universities of the Third Age appeared in the mid-1990s. Today, they are viewed as a special form of work with older people, including the organization of educational and training courses, creative workshops, and various programs (Vysotskaya et al., 2017). According to Donina and Vezetiu (2019), a characteristic feature of educational programs is the satisfaction of the spiritual and intellectual needs of a person and society, i.e., the social need for education. Most often, the third age education is considered as a non-formal type of education; its essential features are voluntary character, accessibility, focus on the personal experience of students, and the practical orientation of learning (Dzhurinski, 2018).

It is also necessary to attend to the quality of education, which, according to Donina and Vodneva (2019), means satisfaction with the result of education, and implies mastering the main components of human culture, acquiring social experience, the latest fundamental knowledge, the ability and desire to use the acquired educational content for the successful solution of practical problems, which will further improve both the quality of individual life and the life of population in general. It should also be noted that intergenerational dialogue is essential for society; it means that it is necessary to look for ways to support the dialogue and build relationships between the elderly and young people, who carry different values and experiences. The implementation of joint projects according to Pevzner et al. (2018) also contributes to the students' civic education, considered as a potential and resource for their personality development. As Pevzner et al. (2019) rightly assert, the project activities of universities pursue different goals: conducting experiments to expand scientific knowledge in various fields and supporting young researchers. It is also important for universities to develop and implement projects that, along with solving purely scientific problems, make a certain contribution to the socio-economic development of Russian regions.

In a postindustrial society, the elderly person is no longer seen as the only carrier of information, who is passing on knowledge from generation to generation. This is one of the reasons why the notion of old age requires revision. A person can have rich experience, high intelligence, be successful, but as soon as one reaches old age, or looks "like an old person," there are the risks of discrimination, of someone else making decisions instead of an older person, of not taking into account the older person's opinion, etc.

One of the priority areas of social policy of Russia and its regions is to improve the quality of life of older people. For this purpose, within the framework of the federal project "Demography", a subproject of "Older Generation" was developed. Another important document is the "Strategy of Actions in the Interests of the Older Generation Representatives in the Russian Federation until 2025", which states that an effective mechanism for supporting the social activity of the older generation is their inclusion in the educational process, particularly, the development of educational services for providing the older generation representatives with functional literacy (legal, financial, entrepreneurial, computer, linguistic, environmental, etc.); development of continuous education programs for older citizens to ensure their professional and personal growth, as well as improve the quality of life (Ob utverzhdenii Strategii deystviy v interesakh pozhilykh lyudey v Rossiyskoy Federatsii do 2025 goda, 2020). Robotova (2014) also emphasizes that if a person does not move away from active life (in its various forms), it is possible to remain a cognitive, active subject for a long time, which enhances the person's vital resources. Today, the Russian educational infrastructure for the elderly is becoming increasingly diverse, offering various organizational forms of education. In the study conducted by Vysotskaya et al. (2017), methods of communicative, biographical, and intergenerational learning are called the most effective methods of educational work with people of the third age.

We agree with Antsyferova (2004) that, in lifelong education, teaching an adult should not only facilitate the assimilation of new knowledge, but also ensure the transition of an individual to new levels of development due to the formation of a new attitude to the world, a new system of values, and a new attitude to oneself. At present, it is necessary not only to revise the essence of old age and the role of a regional university in regards to it, but also to revise the existing approaches of andragogy to the problem of adult education, set forth by Vershlovski (2012) in his book "The Formation of Andragogy as a Science". Among

the basic principles of andragogy, Ovchinnikova (2018) also highlights the principle of joint activity of students, which will form the basis of our research and experiment.

### **3. Research Questions**

Nowadays, universities are being actively included into the regional context. The integration of the university into regional processes goes along three directions when a university is considered a platform for training professionals for specific region spheres; a transmitter of knowledge to various regional communities; a “third” force performing a social function. In this regard, the following research questions need to be answered within the framework of this study.

**3.1.** What is the social role of a regional university for people of the third age?

**3.2.** What tools and methodological techniques are most effective when working with older people?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

In recent years, Universities of the Third Age have been successfully developed in many regions of the Russian Federation, numerous studies of the third age are being conducted; the specifics of educational programs for people of this age category are under analysis. The purpose of this research is to study the capabilities of a regional university to fulfill its social function - additional education for older people, as well as to identify the features of their education while implementing additional education programs.

### **5. Research Methods**

The main research methods are observation, conversation, questionnaires, study and generalization of advanced pedagogical experience, and trial teaching.

### **6. Findings**

In world practice, there are two main models of Third Age University:

- Continental (or French) model, in which the university is a structural unit on the basis of another educational organization.
- British model, in which the university is a separate independent organization.

As the analysis of the system of functioning of Third Age Universities in Russia shows, they are established and organize their educational activities on the basis of various organizations: regional universities, centers of social support of the population, the “Knowledge Society” organization, and regional public organizations.

Since 2007, the project “University of the Third Age” has been implemented in the Pskov Region. This project provides an opportunity for older people to get education, participate in creative work, and spend leisure time. In the “University of the Third Age” more than a thousand retired people are trained in 12 departments, for example, “Law”, “Art Studies”, “Home Academy”, “Information Technologies”, “Health and Longevity”, “Foreign Languages” and others. The University educational process is held in the form of lectures, practical training sessions, thematic meetings, and creative parties.

The current demographic and social situation indicates the need for expanding the range of educational programs for the elderly. The university, acting as the center of regional educational policy, has a special potential and resource for organizing lifelong education for people of the third age. Among the joint projects of the “University of the Third Age” and Pskov State University, one can name “Computer Literacy for Every Pensioner”, “Older Generation”, “Pskov Hansa 39”, etc.

The joint project of “Pskov Hansa 39” involved 38 students, 7 teachers, more than 150 students of the University of Third Age. While jointly organizing the events for “Pskov Hansa 39 as a Platform for European Cooperation”, students of Pskov State University developed professional and pedagogical competencies and worked over forming foreign language communicative competence of the University of Third Age students. Participation in the project proved that while training educators, special attention should be paid to providing future teachers with the competencies in organizing additional adult education.

The study resulted in the integration of communicative teaching methods, biographical teaching methods, and intergenerational teaching methods. Communication teaching methods provide opportunities for companionship and communication; they include discussions, workshops, conferences, guided trips, seminars, interviews, competitions, role-plays, reports, etc. Biographical teaching methods are aimed at overcoming the age crisis, finding one’s own identity, analyzing personally significant events of the past and present, for example, working with an autobiography and publications, creating a wall newspaper, project work, etc. Intergenerational teaching methods are focused on overcoming conflicts between “parents” and “children”, cultures of different generations, and on adaptation to the sociocultural community. These can be various projects, volunteering, intergenerational practices, including the interaction of representatives of different generations.

The results of the survey conducted among young people under the age of 30 (76 respondents) confirmed the results of a study obtained by VCIOM together with Bayer, this study revealed a number of stereotypes about old age. Young people see themselves in old age as active, interested, athletic, financially secure, professional people, while many elderly people (we interviewed 103 people over the age of 60) indicated that they experience financial difficulties, have health problems, and communicate little with relatives and friends.

The study showed that many factors influence the inclusion and participation of an elderly person in the educational process: the nature of professional activity during the life; if a person continues to work at present; involvement in housekeeping; education and attitude to education; the presence or absence of a family; reading experience; health; individual abilities and characteristics of thinking; ICT skills, etc. Older people are mostly interested in foreign languages, dancing, computer literacy, gardening, needlework, i.e., in the practical skills which they can use for active lifestyle.

The project “Pskov Hansa 39” was implemented during foreign language classes: the students learned how to get acquainted, navigate the urban environment, meet guests, talk about the historical sights of Pskov; they studied the peoples’ traditions of Germany and Russia, noting the similarities and differences. To achieve these goals, the teachers used authentic materials, including educational films. The students got tasks for homework, which all the students did with pleasure. It contributed not only to acquiring listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, but also to communication and strengthening ties between generations.

During the classes, the future teachers received the skills of interacting with the aged students, as well as the skills of working with lexical and grammatical materials as teachers. The listeners from the older generation were motivated to communicate in a foreign language.

During classes, various methods were applied: a group or a pair work, a round table, individual work, etc. The latest technical means, audio and video materials were used. For example, working in pairs, the students learned to explain in a foreign language how to walk or to drive to a particular city object, how to place an order in a restaurant. Working in micro-groups, each student presented a short story about one of the city sights of Pskov: the Kremlin, monuments to Princess Olga and A. Nevsky, Gremyachaya and Pokrovskaya towers, Mirozhsky monastery, Anastasievskaya chapel, etc. At one of the classes, the groups went on a city tour, describing sights in a foreign language, role-playing a real situation of communication in a foreign language.

While participating in round tables, the students solved puzzles, crosswords, read and discussed authentic texts in a foreign language, and performed vocabulary and grammar tests. Together, future teachers and participants of the “University of the Third Age” composed and then acted out theatrical performances in a foreign language, went on guided trips, and organized parties for representatives of different generations. In June 2019, during the Hanseatic Days in the city of Pskov, the project participants (students of the “University of the Third Age”, students and teachers of Pskov State University) jointly organized interactive sites where they demonstrated the skills of interaction and communication, in a foreign language as well.

The older students accepted the fact that the younger students possessed a lot of information; the older students were actively involved in the process of education; their life and professional experience complemented rather than dominated this process. The principle of “urgent need” was implemented in the practical character of the classes. The education was focused on real-life tasks in a real context. It was the major principle during the implementation of the “University of the Third Age” project. The educational process was built according to the principle of an individual approach to education based on personal needs, taking into account the individual socio-psychological characteristics. The principle of elective education allowed students to freely choose content, forms, sources, means, periods, time, and assessment of learning outcomes. The principle of reflectivity, based on the student’s conscious attitude to study, contributed to the development of self-motivation of older students. The educational process was built in accordance with the principle of the student’s systematic training and development; as a result, the self-study ability was developed.

## **7. Conclusion**

The concept of the “third mission” or “third role” of the university is becoming a leading trend in the process of modernizing higher education. A change in emphasis on enhancing the social role of a regional university allows a new view of the development of the region to be formed by concentrating additional scientific and educational resources aimed at solving various economic, demographic, and social problems.

A regional university, implementing an integrated system of lifelong education, is able to positively influence the social background of the region. It is the university, with its strong scientific, methodological,

and human potential, that can become the center of project innovation, capable of offering solutions to social problems. Using the potential of the university, it is possible to help improve the quality of life of elderly people, their social adaptation in society, and prolong their active longevity. It should be noted that all project participants positively assessed the project and their participation in it. Students have gained a valuable pedagogical experience.

Traditionally, students majoring in education have pedagogical practice at schools and acquire skills in working with children, exercise the ability to apply methodological techniques and tools that are effective when working with schoolchildren. Students of the “University of the Third Age” acquired skills related to new technologies, foreign language interaction; the classes helped them to overcome social loneliness. As the students of the “University of the Third Age” remark, the studies have a positive effect on their health and socialization. Many people note an improvement in memory, activation of thought processes; all students believe that they have become a part of society; their interest in life has increased. Thus, the experience of collaboration between the university and the “University of the Third Age” has proved to be an effective form of mobilizing the resources of society for social interaction and developing various forms of education.

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