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*Educational and Social Activity of Women
during the Period of Late Old Age*

Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego,
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*Aktywność edukacyjna i społeczna kobiet
w okresie późnej starości*

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In 2020, the scientific publisher at the Pedagogical University of Krakow published a monograph by Katarzyna Białożył, *Aktywność edukacyjna i społeczna kobiet w okresie późnej starości* (Educational and social activity of women during the period of late old age) (269 pages). This monograph was reviewed by Professor Joanna Madalińska-Michalak, PhD, and UPJPII Professor Małgorzata Duda, PhD.

This book forms a part of a scientific discourse on the functioning of elderly people, and in particular, presents the importance of their social, including educational, activities. This issue is relevant and important from the scientific point of view, as these activities are the least known area in people aged 75+. In

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her research studies the author of this book focused especially on determining the role of educational and social activities in the life of female respondents aged 75 to 89 years, living in Śląskie, Mazowieckie and Małopolskie Voivodeships. Their results lead to recommendations for the scientific discourse in a context of valorisation of old age and elderly people aged 75+, and of expanding of previous knowledge. It can be said that it actually forms a basis for developing different approaches to seniors, who in the future will become the most numerous social group.

The content of this book is divided into: *Introduction*, Chapter 1 *Elderly people in our times*, discussing the issues of: Ageing of the Polish society, including current situation and forecasts; A social status of the elderly people in a perspective of social changes; A theory of ageing in a social context; The quality of life of elderly people (healthy ageing, economic and living conditions, satisfaction with life among elderly people, social relations and a phenomenon of loneliness among elderly people) A social change versus a life style of today's seniors. The second chapter presents *Educational and social activities of elderly people*, including: The old age as a development stage in the human life, Elderly people needs in a context of quality of life, Social activity as a factor changing seniors, and Value of education in a context of elderly people development. As it was noted: "In accordance with the assumptions of the theory of activity, by becoming involved in activities appropriate for their age and capabilities, elderly people can pursue their hobbies and life goals, remaining independent, and this enables a constructive perception of own elderly age, despite deteriorated health. These days, both the educational and social activities represent an important area for elderly people functioning" (p. 100).

The theoretically described subject inspired the author to undertake own studies. Their methodological assumptions are provided in part three of this work (Subject and aims of the study; Research issues and variables; Methods, techniques, and research tools; Study organisation and performance; Selection of the sample and characteristics of the study group). The subject of the study were educational and social activities of women aged between 75 and 89 years, as already mentioned, living in urban agglomerations. As the author argues: "Observing demographic trends it must be assumed that a pedagogical reflection over activities of elderly people is justified, as it represents a significant component of social inclusion. Women of late old age can represent a special group in this respect, and their number will steadily grow" (p. 97). The results of the conducted research are presented in chapter 4. Its contents are determined by the following issues: Understanding and importance of educational and social activities amongst study participants; Types and forms of activities of elderly women; Factors determining educational and social activities of studied women; Barriers to undertaking educational and social activities; Needs of elderly people versus educational and social activities; Perception of the old

age and elderly people by the studied women; Educational and social activities versus seniors' life styles.

Considerations presented in theoretical chapters and results of own studies led to the conclusion (*Conclusions and Practical Recommendations*) that educational and social activities play an important role in lives of the studied women, who pursue various types of these activities despite their old age. On a basis of the study results and conclusions drawn on their basis, the author formed practical recommendations that can be used as guidelines for institutions, centres, and organisations cooperating with elderly people at various planes, to promote activities amongst people over 75 years of age. Referring briefly to their main assumptions:

Recommendation 1 concerns strengthening of activities aiming at making elderly people aware what educational and social activities are and how can they be pursued in the period of old age.

Recommendation 2 focuses on promoting of banks of time, and mutual help and support amongst elderly people. A very important role in this area should be played by centres, institutions and organisations working for elderly people, as well as social workers, volunteers, priests, and similar people. The activation policies should reach the wider group of recipients possible, and not only those already active.

Recommendation 3 considers increasing the awareness of elderly people about voluntary work. A creation of a database, where elderly people can find proposals for voluntary activities, with a description of tasks, may help to promote the ideas of voluntary work.

Recommendation 4 assumes a need to focus on expanding the offer for widowed women.

The next recommendation emphasises a need to learn preferences of attendees of the University of Third Age and other institutions, organisations and centres, activating elderly people, instead of imposing on them a schedule and subjects of lectures in a 'top-down' manner.

Recommendation 6 assumes undertaking of actual activities generating positive perception of elderly people and the old age by young and adult people. Increased awareness amongst people from younger age groups and real projects promoting seniors as people socially active, productive in various areas, may imply a higher awareness about the importance of activity in the senior age. Therefore, *education in old age, through old age and for old age* gains in importance.

Recommendation 7 assumes an increase in a number of institutions and centres where seniors describing their health either as satisfactory or poor can pursue various forms of activities matched to their capabilities (needs of people who are 60–70 years old differ from the needs of seniors who are over 75 years of age). Undertaking activities focusing on elderly people, their diversification

should be ensured, as this forms a basis for applying an individual approach and a reliable diagnosis.

Recommendation 8 concerns expanding options for seniors to reach centres, institutions, organisations and associations.

The book ends with extensive *References* and *List of tables*.

Concerning the idea of creating this monograph, and conducting own studies in the area covered by it, it should be admitted that the author is right to state that demographic forecasts and an increase in numbers in the oldest subpopulations of elderly people imply a need to undertake specific actions for the future, aiming at improving functioning of people over 75 years of age. The educational and social activities definitely represent important factors generating positive experiencing of own old age, despite the deteriorated health.

Taking into account that issues related to demographic and generational transformations of the today's world and their consequences/challenges to educational processes considered at a global level are still valid, the reviewed publication is very useful. It can be used by students, PhD students, teachers, andragogy specialists, gerontologists, and social workers alike. Its substantial value and formed recommendations should also interest representatives responsible for social policies, as well as representatives of organisations working for elderly people, described in the book. Publication of Katarzyna Białożył, PhD, represents an important contribution to the subject of activities of people, particularly those over 75 years of age. The author expands previous research areas on this subject, and reading of this book contributes to forming of new justified theses. It may become an inspiration for further scientific research and explorations.