



## Educational activity of seniors as a predictor of successful ageing

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The article presents a paradigmatic change taking place in the theoretical approach to adult education. Against this background and in the context of contemporary conditions, the author points to the importance of learning from everyday experience and the role of educational activity in this process. The discussed issues were focused on the elderly.

**KEY WORDS:** educational activity, paradigmatic change, continuous learning, life-long learning, elderly people, post-modernity

### Introduction

Adult education is a concept that is most often associated with institution, coercion, as well as measurable results that are expected in the labour market. It should be mentioned, however, that when talking about adult education, it is necessary to place this area alongside various educational processes – first of all, the activity of learning. Although this activity takes place during each educational process and should be considered crucial for human development, as a separate process, it does not gain due recognition in social assessment.

It should also be noted that adult education covers different age groups: early adulthood, middle adulthood and old age. None of these groups should be overlooked or favoured in the context of adult education. On the other hand, it is necessary to pay attention to the specific nature of educational needs or developmental opportunities of people from individual age cohorts. At the same time, it can be stated that education is an activity attributed to every adult person.

In the public space, adult education is popularised through various media, which is aimed at gaining an education. This state of affairs also confirms the conviction that old age is a period of life excluded from educational activity. The idea-concepts of adult education, promoted mainly by andragogues – continuous learning and lifelong learning – do not go beyond the world of academia, and they have different interpretations in the public opinion. Only Third Age Universities are presented as an educational solution for seniors. It should be mentioned that these are institutions for a small group of elderly people (mainly living in cities), and also that their mission is not an educational goal, although it also pursues such a goal. On the basis of what is happening in the public sphere, in the mass media, the conclusion can be drawn that older people are not seen as “participants in educational services” and that they do not have such needs as a result of retirement. In addition, seniors themselves do not relate educational activity to themselves, or at least they do not consider it an important determinant of their lives.

The author’s intention is to present against the background of theoretical concepts a reflection on the position that the traditional understanding of adult education, resulting from the socially established narrow interpretation of the concept of continuous learning should be rejected in favour of the concept of lifelong learning, which is the path to the development of contemporary humans and their functioning in a changing modernity. The article also refers to the characteristics of selected conditions of modernity, which determine the life of elderly people, to indicate that these are areas, among others, requiring educational activities.

## Theoretical orientations implying adult education

Adult education is a sphere of human activity, which at present has a strong theoretical position, mainly in andragogy. In contemporary concepts that constitute adult education there are two parallel paradigms on which adult education is based: continuous learning and lifelong learning. Although both paradigms strongly emphasise the importance of educational activity in the whole life cycle of a person, each of them specifically addresses the issue of education and its implementation. The question arises: which of these paradigms takes on meaning in the postmodern period? It is therefore worth examining the assumptions that form the individual theories.

The concept of continuous learning has been setting teleological assumptions and the direction of adult education since the 1970s. It should be noted that from the very beginning, it had many creators and propagators. Its creation the thesis and conceptualisation theses arose mainly from international conferences under the auspices of UNESCO, as well as works of many authors of various nationalities, including Robert J. Kidd.<sup>1</sup>

R. Kidd presented a comprehensive approach to lifelong learning by distinguishing three dimensions of education: education in length, education in width and education in depth. Education in length consists of all levels of school education – from kindergarten, through school to university level (currently this would be post-graduate studies). Education in width is carried out in extracurricular forms of learning and allows for achieving objectives of learning about different areas of life, science and culture outside formal education. On the other hand, education in depth refers to one's own activities and is expressed through the process of self-education and self-fulfilment.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Z. Wiatrowski, *Różne wymiary refleksji nad edukacją dorosłych*, [in:] *Stan i perspektywy rozwoju refleksji nad edukacją dorosłych*, ed. T. Aleksander, D. Barwińska, Instytut Technologii Eksploatacji – PIB, Kraków–Radom 2007, p. 109.

<sup>2</sup> J. Półturzycki, *Kształcenie ustawiczne i jego konsekwencje dla edukacji*, [in:] *Kształcenie ustawiczne Idee i doświadczenia*, ed. Z.P. Kruszewski, J. Półturzycki, E.A. Wesołowska, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Novum, Płock 2003, pp. 39–59.

The process of self-education appears in the framing of the idea of continuous learning presented by R. Kidd. It complements the holistic approach to education and distinguishes the – important for human development – activity of self-organisation of learning. Taking into account the characteristics of adulthood, it should be acknowledged that one's own educational activity is of particular importance and should occur as a natural tendency of the individual.

In later years, the idea of continuous learning was developed very widely, but not only by the andragogical community. Influential organisations have made a significant contribution to its practice: UNESCO, the European Commission, the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).<sup>3</sup>

The concept of continuous learning is, in a sense, the resultant of the discourse between the organisations that determine its direction. This discourse is multi-threaded and results-oriented. As Mieczysław Malewski<sup>4</sup> points out, „UNESCO, which considers itself the guardian of the European humanist tradition, emphasises the developmental and moral values associated with education, the World Bank emphasises the economic and market aspects of education, and the European Commission and the Council of Europe try to bring to the fore those dimensions of education which serve to strengthen European integration and build a sense of European identity among citizens of EU Member States”.

Taking into account the various influences on the shape of educational reality, it can be concluded that contemporary adult education is based on the assumptions of adult human development, human capital theory and the concept of human resources development. Ewa Solarczyk-Ambrozik, presents this issue in a slightly different, but excellent way: “[...] modern adult education is based on the paradigm of technological development and socio-cultural modernisation, and the promotion of the Western ideal of rationali-

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<sup>3</sup> M. Malewski, *O 'polityczności' andragogiki*, Edukacja Dorosłych, 2013, 1(68).

<sup>4</sup> M. Malewski, *O 'polityczności' andragogiki*, Edukacja Dorosłych, 2013, 1(68), p. 15.

ty and individual fulfilment, and the main contribution to defining its character as an area of social research and practice is made by UNESCO works and publications [...].”<sup>5</sup>

The concept of continuous learning has been particularly inscribed in the educational practice of adults. Various forms of organising of adult education have emerged, and new ones are also developing (e.g. coaching, tutoring, mentoring). A system of education for adults was also created – from the level of primary school to higher education (university). Opportunities for people of all age cohorts (Third Age Universities for the elderly) to participate in education have also been ensured.

The idea of continuous learning has been defined as a complex of educational activities organised by institutions, but also by the individual themselves. However, in reality, its implementation mainly boils down to organising vocational education. The aim of education policy has been to adapt workers to the realities of the labour market, and this challenge is met in various forms of organisation offering education, further training or professional development. This imposed form of education rather than motivation to learn triggered a reluctance to engage in educational activity, and even negative emotions attributed to learning. Such an approach has also marginalised the process of self-education. Schools do not prepare their students for independent educational activities. The process of learning (self-education) is an area commonly underestimated and neglected.

The postulates of lifelong learning not only fit in very strongly with the scientific approaches to adult education, but have also become accepted in the social space. Unfortunately, adult education in the public perspective usually boils down to the processes of further education and professional development, so it is focused on professional goals. It is perceived mainly as a significant component in

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<sup>5</sup> E. Stolarczyk-Ambrozik, *Od uspołecznienia ‘mas’ do upodmiotowienia jednostek – od oświaty dorosłych do uczenia się przez całe życie*, Edukacja Dorosłych, 2013, 1(68), p. 38.

social stratification, changing the human *habitus*. It can be said that these theses have permanently taken root also in the consciousness of the present-day seniors, who received education in the years of crystallisation of the idea of continuous learning, or were professionally active and through gaining subsequent levels of education achieved various types of benefits, especially in their professional work, e.g. promotions, raises, etc. This approach has meant that other educational outcomes, such as development, better functioning in different areas, development of interests, have not been noticed. This situation led to the glorification of institutional education and, at the same time, to the omission of the self-education process.

The 1990s brought a change in the rhetoric of adult education researchers. It manifests itself in the fact that reflection on educational processes is focused on the individual and the learning process, and not, as before, on educational institutions and the education process.<sup>6</sup>

The term lifelong learning has not yet been clearly defined, even among andragogues. Therefore, the scope of meaning of this concept does not yet have a precise theoretical definition. The understanding of the idea can be related to the tendency that it initiates in education. Mieczysław Malewski points to two directions of changes introduced by the lifelong learning paradigm. The author presents them as follows: "First, the lifelong learning concept shifts the focus from educational institutions (teaching) to the learning individuals in local communities (learning). Secondly, he renounces professional scientific knowledge in favour of everyday experience, which is present in the daily interactions that constitute the worlds of people's lives."<sup>7</sup>

The concept of lifelong learning emphasises a different, specific understanding of learning. In its assumptions, an adult person is

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<sup>6</sup> M. Malewski, *Od nauczania do uczenia się O paradygmatycznej zmianie w andragogice*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, Wrocław 2010.

<sup>7</sup> M. Malewski, *Od nauczania do uczenia się O paradygmatycznej zmianie w andragogice*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, Wrocław 2010, p. 47.

framed as a subject – as a person capable of organising their own education and assuming responsibility for it. There is no top-down (imposed) modelling of human development. An adult decides individually whether or not to participate in education. Education itself is also framed differently than in the paradigm of continuous learning. It is no longer treated as a good imposed on people, but it is given to them as a choice. In addition, by liberating itself from the institutional framework and allowing people to participate outside their area, education has extended its area to all areas of human life. Institutional education is no longer understood as the only way to human development, which is particularly important in the case of older people.

Nowadays, an adult has a wide range of possibilities in terms of fulfilling their educational needs. They can take part in already functioning formal education or constantly developing non-formal education. They also have the prospect of acquiring knowledge and skills on their own.

An important role, in line with the guiding principle of lifelong learning, is played by non-formal education, which is realised every day during the life of the individual through their activities in various areas (family, free time). It takes on particular importance in the present because the conditions of life are becoming more and more complex and it is necessary to learn to function within them. In addition, learning, the subject of which is everyday life, is also a significant carrier of human development.

It should be noted that the concept of lifelong learning and its application to older people can be considered appropriate to the situation of many seniors, as learning from everyday experience concerns every person. Therefore, educational activity, which differentiates the results of this process, is particularly important in this activity. This activity can manifest itself in very different ways, starting from the level of interest in a given issue through various forms taken: reading, mental games, tourism, interpersonal contacts, ordinary life situations, etc. It should be noted that the concept of lifelong learning imposes on individuals not only activity but also creativity in terms of their own development.

The involvement of older people in the learning process is diverse and presents itself specifically for each person. It depends mainly on how the person presents themselves in terms of interests, predispositions, ambitions and health. Achievement in self-education objectives will depend on the above factors.

Education as a lifelong process, encoded in human existence, is inscribed in a dignified experience of old age. Olga Czerniawska is very precise about this issue: "Without education, old age has less chance of 'playing out' the full humanity. Without education, old age can destroy a person, ruin them physically and mentally, socially and spiritually."<sup>8</sup>

Old age is marked by many losses: decreased physical and mental fitness, loss of loved ones, changes in family and social roles. The situation connected with experiencing various types of losses or the perspective of losing one's life requires constant rediscovery of one's identity and rereading the meanings. The educational activity of the elderly is a way to understand oneself, one's old age, as well as giving satisfaction from learning and the educational results obtained. Among many others, a significant effect of education is also maintaining mental and physical fitness.

## **Selected areas of "uncertainty" for older people**

The determinants of human life determine its duration to a large, both physically and psychologically. The historical period in which a person lives determines their possibilities of development and self-fulfilment in various dimensions. It is also an important predictor for the quality of life of older people.

The face of modernity, both the one referring to the surrounding reality and to social life, was shaped by the violent changes that took place at the end of the 20th century. Many of these transfor-

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<sup>8</sup> O. Czerniawska, *Drogi i bezdroża andragogiki i gerontologii*, WSHE, Łódź 2000, p. 178.



mations, due to their broad scope and intense character, are noticeable and recognisable by people living today. They have been clearly marked and meticulously described by sociologists in the literature on the subject. One can notice that the authors of sociological concepts present modern times through the prism of change and, due to its dimension, define them as late modernity, second modernity, or they call them postmodern. However, despite the heterogeneous naming, they are similarly characterised in the literature on the subject, and the name used results only from the acceptance or rejection of the thesis concerning the entry of humankind into the next phase of development. However, they share a common position on the emergence of very significant changes in the world, which have transformed the so-called modern world and set a new quality in almost all areas of human life.

The changes that took place during the 20th century are extensive, as they encompassed not only the physical space of human life, but also became a fundamental part of the sphere of social life and culture. At the same time, one has to admit that they are not a closed process, but they are still dynamic in nature, even though they escape human attention on a daily basis. In Poland, they result not only from civilisational changes, but also from political transformation, which resulted in a change of approach to many different social or economic issues. In the life attitude of a person living in new political and economic conditions, features related mainly to the economic aspect of life, such as entrepreneurship, creativity, independence, individualism, have taken on importance.

Modern times, due to technological progress and improvement of living conditions in social perception, are assessed as conducive to human existence. Against this background, however, the following questions arise: How do the current conditions fit into the lives of older people? Is this world really friendly or is it alien to older people?

The characteristics of the present day, determined by sociologists, do not indicate the stability of the conditions of human life. In sociological conceptualisations, much space has been devoted to the

exemplification of new threats and safety issues. The importance of the phenomenon was stressed by Ulrich Beck, who described the present mankind as a „risk society”.<sup>9</sup> Anthony Giddens<sup>10</sup> also referred to the issue of increased risk, which bases life in uncertain conditions on a mechanism of trust and reflection. The dangers described by the above authors are characterised by the fact that they are not well recognised, and their effects may be unpredictable. Some of them are already taking place, while others may still happen. Examples of the threats facing humanity today include environmental threats, terrorism, military threats, economic crises. Their distinguishing feature is their global dimension, as well as the fact that they can affect any person regardless of social status or material resources. In addition, they are very broad in scope, and it can also be said that modern threats cover many areas of everyday life up to the deeper foundations of human existence.

The well-known Polish sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman, described postmodernity through a metaphor of liquidity.<sup>11</sup> In this sociologist’s view, liquidity is the overarching category in the assessment of reality and is transferred to different levels and spheres of human life. It is expressed in the fact that every area of human existence becomes blurred, fragmentary, impermanent, and in the reception of an individual, means instability and causes uncertainty. Therefore, it should be assumed that the life of modern humans is based on impermanent existential foundations. As Bauman writes: “The most acute and stubborn worries that haunt such a life are the fears

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<sup>9</sup> For more on this subject, see U. Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, SAGE Publications Ltd., London 1992.

<sup>10</sup> For more, see A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge 1990.

<sup>11</sup> The generalisations of Z. Bauman’s concepts concerning the postmodern world contained in the article were formulated on the basis of the following books by this author:

*Liquid Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge 2000.

*Postmodern Ethics*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 1993.

*Liquid Life*, Polity, Cambridge, 2005.

of being caught napping, or failing to catch up with fast-moving events, or being left behind [...] of missing the moment that calls for a change of tack before crossing the point of no return."<sup>12</sup>

Taking into account the factor of social change and the indicated symptoms accompanying the present, it can be concluded that liquid modernity requires a specific attitude on the part of the individual, which should be characterised by readiness to accept changes and the ability to cope with them.

Referring to the problem of changes, it can be noted that their scope and pace have a direct impact on human functioning, both in the psychological and functional areas. At the same time, it should be stressed that not all people react equally to a given situation and the same is true for personal references in relation to the dynamics changing in different areas of reality. There are people who are open-minded and willing to accept new experiences, but there are also those who have difficulty in doing so. It is also possible to speak of differences between people in this respect, taking into account the age factor. In the case of older people, unlike young people, the specificity is the predominance of adaptation processes over assimilation processes, which means that the modification of behaviour is not characteristic for this age group and adaptation to changes does not occur naturally and presents itself in them in a specific way.

When considering modernity and the effects of the changes that have taken place in reality, reference should be made to the phenomenon of globalisation, which is an essential feature of modernity in a broad way, leading to the disappearance of borders and the encroachment of what is in the world. The transformation of the political system has made this process possible and has inscribed itself in its character, which means not only transformations in the economic space, but also penetration through various areas of human existence, causing transformations in many aspects of social and personal life.

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<sup>12</sup> Z. Bauman, *Liquid Life*, Polity, Cambridge 2005, p. 2.

The current of globalisation changes has a significant impact on the sphere of living nature of contemporary man. At present, he can no longer count on state support, because his structures are helpless in the face of a number of phenomena caused by globalisation and its impact on the life of an individual. This means that state organisations no longer provide sufficient support in many matters relating to human existence: social, caring, professional, health or personal life. This situation causes the person to remain completely alone in the face of various life situations. Zygmunt Bauman wrote about it as follows: "One of the most important aspects of post-modern transformations is the loss of the state's ability, need and will to lead spiritually (including morally)."<sup>13</sup>

If we consider the needs of older people, it should be noted that the above circumstances put them in a very difficult situation, because there are many people in this age group who need different types of guidance or support. In addition, it is difficult for older people to find a fit in the new rules of functioning of state structures. It must also be assumed that many of them are not familiar with the responsibilities of public bodies and are unable to obtain information in this area, and thus demand organised care or other assistance. In addition, it must be acknowledged that there is not yet a sufficiently developed network of facilities for the elderly.

A characteristic attribute of the present era is a permanent search for one's own identity. Variable living conditions and the uncertainty they create have led to the emergence of the concept of identity in a new sense. According to Z. Bauman, the earlier philosophical stance, which assumed that identity is discovered, has changed. Identity is now a goal and a constant aspiration, which over time undergoes modifications due to the ubiquitous changeability (including the changeability of plans).<sup>14</sup>

Searching for and constructing identity is not an easy task in the world set by liquidity and consumption. Bauman clearly noticed

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<sup>13</sup> Z. Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, op. cit., p. 151 ff.

<sup>14</sup> For more, see Z. Bauman, *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej*, Instytut Kultury, Warsaw 1994.

and pointed out that modern society is mainly a society of consumers, not producers. Consumption permeates various areas of life and becomes the driving force behind the aspirations and actions of the human race. He wrote about the rank and influence of this phenomenon: “[The market] relentlessly hammers home the message that everything is or could be a commodity, or if it is still short of becoming a commodity, that it should be handled *like* a commodity; it implies that things had *better be* ‘like commodities’ and ought to be viewed with suspicion, and better still rejected or avoided in the first place, if they refuse to fall in with the consumer-object pattern”.<sup>15</sup> Consumption takes on very significant proportions in the life of society, so it grows to the rank of what the author calls consumerism. The sociologist clearly emphasises the character of this phenomenon of human existence and calls it the consumer syndrome. It is understood as “a batch of variegated yet closely interconnected attitudes and strategies [...] assumptions of the ways of the world and the ways of treading them [...]”.<sup>16</sup>

Consumerism has become a guiding idea for modern societies that ignores any previously adopted rules of conduct. The extent of the phenomenon and its dominant significance may be evidenced by the commodification of all areas of life. Marek Krajewski writes about this, stating that the object of sale can be anything that „is able to attract the customer’s attention, can become a commodity – pathologies, human misfortunes and tragedies, but also spiritual values, tradition, so-called personalities and individuals or family life and privacy.”<sup>17</sup>

It is not difficult to agree with the authors’ observations concerning consumerism, because each of us experiences its effects and influence on the perception of reality. Contemporary humans have to fit into the above conditions in order to make various life decisions. However, it should be noted that life „marked” by consumer-

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<sup>15</sup> Z. Bauman, *Liquid Life*, Polity, Cambridge 2005, p. 88.

<sup>16</sup> Z. Bauman, *Liquid Life*, Polity, Cambridge 2005, p. 83.

<sup>17</sup> M. Krajewski, *Konsumpcja i współczesność. O pewnej perspektywie rozumienia świata współczesnego*, Kultura i Społeczeństwo, 1997, no. 3.

ism promotes material values, which are often alien to the elderly. On the other hand, spiritual values, which are of great importance to them, are omitted. The current slogan of „everything for sale” is contrary to the ethics in the spirit of which today’s seniors grew up. It can therefore be presumed that they do not accept the current system of values based on consumerism as natural and close to them. The danger that consumerism poses is not only to accept this phenomenon as a value and to be uncritically influenced by it, but also to be exposed to all kinds of fraud. It has to be admitted that older people are quite credulous and give in to various forms of swindling: they can be persuaded to buy goods, even though they do not need them, they pay a much higher price than they should.

Consumption, which is recognised as a key social value, is certainly not the right direction for people’s aspirations. However, in addition to its many negative effects, there are some positive developments in the opportunities offered by the current market. People can purchase products or use various types of services depending on their needs. Within this wide range of services, many elderly people can also find something for themselves. It can be assumed that beauty or health-supporting products and the medical and tourist services sector play a very important role for this generation of people.

From the point of view of consumerism, it is also worth paying attention to the issue of the collection of financial benefits by the elderly, which encounters negative opinions in the context of the distribution of social goods. A lack of social understanding of the entitlements of older people and their needs is certainly very difficult for seniors to accept.

It should also be noted that there is a significant group of seniors who cannot find their place in the offer of the consumer market. It turns out that it has such a strong influence that such an individual may even feel excluded from social life. Z. Bauman writes about this issue: “In a society of consumers, it is above all the inadequacy of the person as a consumer that leads to social degradation and ‘internal exile’. It is this inadequacy, this inability to acquit oneself of the consumer’s duties, that turns into bitterness at being left being,

disinherited or degraded, shut off or excluded from the social feast to which others gained entry.”<sup>18</sup>

Identity is subject to change regardless of the individual's age. It is characteristic that at earlier stages of life, it is formed as a natural process within the framework of personality formation. On the other hand, in the period of old age, the main driver of its acquisition, reconstruction or modification are the changing circumstances of life, especially critical events or transformations in the cultural and social space, which require a response. There are many new issues with which humans are confronted in the present reality, but as an example one can cite in vitro fertilisation, euthanasia, homosexual relations, cloning. It is more difficult for an elderly person to adopt even a socially accepted stance or to remain neutral or indifferent to social issues. It must be acknowledged that they face many different issues that are incompatible with their system of values, which are dilemmas to be resolved. Critical events are also quite common motivators to shaping identity in this period of life. This is not a simple task, but one that also gives rise to many fears and frustrations.

Globalisation also involves the homogenisation of culture, and therefore the aspect of values that have been shifted beyond national borders. Changes in the axiological layer can cause a number of dilemmas, as they break with the traditional framing. The scale of the phenomenon is so large that it is possible to speak of a new adopted catalogue of norms, which concerns various areas of human life: family, life aspirations, social relations, etc. It is difficult for the elderly, brought up in traditional values and other conditions, to understand certain determinants of contemporary culture. This does not make everyday life easier for them because as we all know, culture has a great impact on people. It not only determines the space of their life, but it is also an adaptation mechanism and a system of values. It is therefore important that its aspects do not appear alien to older people.

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<sup>18</sup> Z. Bauman, *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, Berkshire 2004, p. 38.

The consequences of globalisation for the cultural area include many elements, among which language deserves attention. It is worth stressing this aspect of reality, because there have been fundamental changes in this area, and this is a very important part of everyone's social life.

As Antonina Grybosiowa<sup>19</sup> notes, there are currently two language subcodes. One of them is the Polish colloquial language, which is characterised by an abundance of vulgarisms, epithets and folk metaphors. The second is the official Polish language, which consists of many Latinisms, Anglicisms, technical and economic terminology.

Some positive aspects can also be seen in these language changes, but the fact that the language has been depreciated in many areas is particularly noteworthy. Not only is perfection in the use of one's mother tongue overlooked, but the use of concepts that violate moral norms and sacrum is also universally accepted. In interpersonal communication, the traditional catalogue of norms referring to the etiquette of conversing with women or the elderly, etc., is vanishing.

Both the language codes are foreign to elderly people who, through upbringing and education, have been prepared to value literary language and to respect language criteria. It is certainly difficult for them to come to terms with the relaxed rules of linguistic correctness and the adoption of a new language code. In addition, learning new terms, which are essential in everyday life, may not be an easy task for them.

The value highly appreciated in the life of every person is the family. If we take into account the modern family, we should first of all notice the disappearance of multi-generational families and the effects of this state of affairs on the quality of intergenerational rela-

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<sup>19</sup> A. Grybosiowa, *Dynamika zmian językowych o podłożu kulturowym u progu XXI wieku (na materiale polskim)*, [in:] <http://docplayer.pl/24358064-Dynamika-zmian-jezykowych-o-podlozu-kulturowym-u-progu-xxi-wieku-na-materiale-polskim-zmiany-w-swiadomosci-mowiacych.html> [access: 1.07.2018].



tions. Living in a multi-generational family was connected with living together, which, in turn, helped to build bonds between its individual members. In such a family, there were mutual obligations. Older people could count on the help of younger family members, and for their part, they offered care for grandchildren. In this way, the intergenerational integration was tightened. The fact that families give too little attention and time to the elderly is a common situation nowadays. They focus mainly on their own families and professional life, which consume their time and despite good intentions, it is difficult for them to find opportunities for more frequent contacts with their parents. This situation causes many elderly people to experience a sensation of misunderstanding and loneliness.

Contemporary conditions are complex. On the one hand, we can talk about the progress of civilisation and its benefits in the form of technological or scientific progress, and on the other hand, about the social risks that have arisen as a result of it. The current reality is so difficult and diverse that in the circumstances of promoted individualism or consumerism it is quite difficult to find a friendly and familiar living space for the elderly. The only people who can fit into the indicated circumstances are those who find their place in the social hierarchy, and the factors conducive to this are wealth, education, physical and mental fitness despite their age, as well as educational activity. It is thanks to education that it will be possible to adapt to various conditions of the present day and to make conscious use of its many benefits.

## Conclusions

It is just as important for older people to take up education as it is for the younger generations. This type of activity cannot be abandoned due to advanced age. It should be noted, however, that measurable results of education may vary slightly, due to different needs of people in different age groups. In addition to other results,

working people will also expect results that are related to their work. Older people who have retired will be guided mainly by cognitive interests, as well as issues related to everyday life or existential issues.

It should be made clear that educational activity can accompany people to a greater or lesser extent, as life is also the content of learning. Learning emphasises human dignity and is a tool for understanding the world and one's own person, as well as for improving oneself at all ages.

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