

EDUCATION AS A RESOURCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF «THIRD AGE» SOCIAL COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The new pension reform in Russia expands the retirement period for both women and men. In the next five years, the number of the «third age» people, which includes Russians of retirement and pre-retirement age, will increase significantly. There is a need to improve the quality of their human capital. Under these conditions, the role of education as a resource for the preservation and development of the «third age» people grows. The purpose of the article is to reveal the problems of inclusion of Russians of the «third age» in education of various forms and types. Achieving the goal allowed: 1. To show how the state social policy should provide educational opportunities for the community of the «third age» people; 2. To justify the possibility of education to transform this community from a problem to a resource; 3. To prove the necessity of transformation of education into an intangible asset for different forms and types of professional, labor, intellectual, cultural, leisure, civil activity of the «third age» people. An empirical study is implemented by the methods of survey of the «third age» people, analysis of documents and statistical data.

Key words: pension reform, education, community of the «third age» people, human capital

JEL Code: J26, J11, J14

Introduction

In Russia, as in many European countries, the number of the «third age» people is growing rapidly. However, Russian society is poorly adapted to this demographic challenge. Not developed «silver» labor market, «silver» leisure industry, medicine and consumer market. There is ageism in many areas of public life. The education could be served as a way to overcome many problems of «third age» people. It is a resource for their preservation and development. However, for the older generation of Russians access to education is limited. The purpose of our research was to study the problem of inclusion of the «third age» Russians in the education of various forms and kinds.

The problem for the education of the «third age» people is well studied in European science and social practice. A number of studies are aimed at studying the interests, needs and expectations of older people related to continuing education (Dupuis-Blanchard, Theriault, Mazerolle, 2016; Yang, 2016). Especially should be marked the works on the impact of education on health, social well-being and longevity of «third age» people (Steptoe, Hamer, Butcher et al, 2011; Yamashita, Bardo, Liu et al, 2019). Studies have been conducted on various models of training the «third age» people, including intergenerational model (Dauenhauer, Steitz, Cochran, 2016). Our research is based on studies that reveal the relationship between adult education and labor activity of older people (Midtsundstad, Nielsen, 2019). Some of them show how education in different countries contributes to the adaptation of people to retirement and aging (Jamieson, 2016; Lessenich, 2015; Mokroguz, 2015; Grigorieva et al, 2015).

Analysis of the literature shows that in European countries the model of «silver» education includes additional education, «silver» segment of higher education, non-formal education practices. These studies are interdisciplinary and reveal the relationship between way of life, economic well-being and education of the «third age» people, the importance of public policies that provide access to education older adults (Challenges of Aging... 2015; Biggs, McGann, Bowman, 2017; Craciun, Gellert, Flick, 2017; Conde-Sala, Portellano-Ortiz, Calvo-Perxas, 2017). These studies make a great contribution to the development of this topic. However, they poorly reflect the Russian specifics and problems of older Russians. It is necessary to study the readiness of the Russian state and the Russian education system to include people of the «third age» in the educational sphere.

1 Methods

The empirical study was conducted using the methods of survey of the «third age» people, analysis of documents and statistics. The analysis of the documents made it possible to study the content of the state educational and social policy towards older Russians. Regulations and state programs developed at the Federal level and in the regions were studied. Among the Federal acts analyzed the laws on education, employment, the Strategy of long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation until 2020, the Strategy of action in the interests of older citizens in the Russian Federation until 2025, 7 national projects and 5 state programs. Among the acts of regional importance, regional state programs were analyzed. The documents were selected according to two criteria: 1) the presence of an educational

component; 2) references to the category of the «third age» people. The methodology involved the allocation in the documents of theses, sections, targets and indicators of funding programs, correlated with the key words: «older generation», «pensioners», «education for people of the "third age"», etc.

A sociological survey of people aged 45 years and older was conducted in the Sverdlovsk region in January-March 2019 (sample quota, n=415 people). The sample covered residents of the main types of municipalities of the region (megalopolis, large, medium and small cities, towns and rural settlements). The structure of the questionnaire included blocks relating to the characteristics of the educational status of respondents, their educational needs and expectations, inclusion in various types and forms of education, readiness to continuing education. The acquired quantitative data were processed in the SPSS Statistics program.

For statistical analysis of data there were used the following approaches: frequency, correlation, crosstabulation. The frequency analysis allowed to study the structure of educational needs of respondents and the distribution of their expectations from education. The correlation analysis made it possible to identify the impact of socio-demographic characteristics of respondents on their readiness to be included in education by calculating the availability indicators (Chi-square) and connection tightness (Cramer's coefficient). The crosstabulation analysis helped us to interpret the relationship structure between the variables. We took associations that had asymptotic significance (2-sided) <0.005 and Cramer's coefficient > 0.200 as substantial ones.

The analysis of statistical data was based on demographic and educational information. The method of dynamic series analysis was used. This allowed us to correlate demographic trends in the aging of Russian society with indicators of the system of continuing education, as well as the educational level of older Russians.

2 Results and Discussion

2.1 The structure of the social community of the «third age» people: the growth of the number and level of education

The numerical growth of the considered community in Russia is evidenced by the data of table 1. In 2018, the number of retirement age people (men aged 60 and more, women aged 55 and more) was more than 37 million. People of pre-retirement age – men from 55 to 59 and women from 50 to 54 years – in 2018 there were almost 10 million people.

Tab. 1: Distribution of the Russian population by gender and age groups, 01.01.2018

<i>Age</i>	<i>Men and women</i>	<i>Men, pers.</i>	<i>Women, pers.</i>
55-59	11 049 384	4 912 848	6 136 536
60-64	9 782 917	4 055 180	5 727 737
65-69	7 936 998	3 054 010	4 882 988
70 and older	13 506 132	3 999 322	9 506 810
<i>Of the total population aged:</i>			
younger than able to work (0-15 years)	27 253 744	13 980 407	13 273 337
able to work (men 16-59 years, women 16-54 years)	82 264 105	43 030 996	39 233 109
older than able to work (men 60 years and older, women 55 years and older)	37 362 583	11 108 512	26 254 071

Source: Population of the RF by sex and age on 01.01.2018. http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b18_111/Main.htm

According to the forecast, by 2023 the number of the «third age» people will exceed 40 million. The number of «silver» community will exceed a third of the country's population.

One of the main characteristics of the «silver» community is its educational level (tab. 2). According to this criterion, there are serious differences in the age groups of pensioners and pre-pensioners. In the analysis we also covered the age groups from 45 years. This is due to the fact that already now the Russians, who are on the threshold of pre-retirement age (45-50 years), are thinking about the prospects of their professional activity and future employment in the new status.

Tab. 2: The educational level of people of pre-retirement and retirement age, in %

<i>Age groups</i>	<i>Higher education</i>	<i>Higher incomplete education</i>	<i>Secondary vocational education</i>	<i>Secondary complete education</i>	<i>Secondary incomplete basic education</i>
45-49	28,2	1,6	50,0	16,1	3,6
50-54	24,3	1,3	51,3	18,8	3,8
55-59	21,5	1,1	51,1	20,6	5,2
60-64	20,1	1,0	48,5	20,9	8,6
65-69	20,5	1,0	44,8	19,5	12,3
70 and older	13,7	0,7	27,8	14,8	23,2

Source: The education attainment of population by age groups data of the 2015 micro census of population. Russian statistical yearbook. 2017. M.: Rosstat, 2017, p. 179.

Table 2 shows that the share of persons with higher and secondary vocational education in the pre-retirement and retirement age groups (45 years and older) is steadily declining. A sharp drop in the level of education is observed after 70 years. There is an objective need to improve the level and quality of education of «silver» community people.

Basic education, which they received in the Soviet period, is very high quality, but requires updating of competencies in accordance with the actual needs of the labor sphere.

2.2 Does public policy provide access to education for people of the «third age»?

In 2018, Russia adopted a new law on pensions (Federal Law No. 350 of 03.10.2018). It pushed the retirement age of Russians by 5 years and increased the need for their inclusion in the system of continuing education. We have analyzed relevant regulations that reflect the content and objectives of state policy towards older people. The documents elaborated by the Federal ministries are literally full of positive rhetoric and numerous declarations of the need for «silver» education, the creation «a society for people of all ages». They set a strategic goal of increasing the share of «third age» people included in various kinds of continuing education. However, the content of regional programs shows a sharp gap between declarations and real opportunities to realize the goal. In this group of documents, there are no indicators for the «silver» education, there is no data about financial and organizational support for this type of education, and there is no reference to target groups.

Here is an example of one of the regions of Russia – Sverdlovsk region. Table 3 shows the correlation between demographic trends in the region, targets indicators for the education of older citizens in computer literacy and amount of financing.

Tab. 3: The dynamics of older generation in the Sverdlovsk region and the targets of the regional state program «Older generation» (until 2025)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
People older than working age	1 045,301	1 065,967	1 085,105	1 101,492	1 116,422	1 134,202
Growth rate of people over working age, in % to 2014	-	+1,98	+3,8	+5,38	+6,8	-
Older people teaching computer literacy	6 300	5 760	2 835	558	6 100	1 425
The amount of funding for the educational program «Electronic citizen», thousand rubles	17 501,4	17 381,4	8 225,1	1 800,0	20 000,0	1 141,4
Costs per student on average, rub.	2788	3018	2901	3226	3279	801

Sources: Complex program of Sverdlovsk region «Older generation» 2014-2018, 2019-2015; Rosstat. Population of the Sverdlovsk region by sex and age on 01.01.2018. http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b18_111/Main.htm

State educational policy is still focused on the younger generation of Russians. The solution to the problem of education for Russians of pre-retirement and retirement age is shifted to their own shoulders and the shoulders of employers. Meanwhile, laws and state programs lack any measures to support employers who invest in the education of their employees, especially older workers. Employers themselves are not willing to invest in social corporate programs. According to statistics, the annual investment of employers in corporate training does not exceed 0.3% of the wage Fund (Bulletin... 2017).

The educational programs financed by the state through the regional labor and employment departments are not adequate to the educational needs of the older generation and the labor market. They are mainly focused on low-status, low-paid working professions. These programs are not intended for people with higher education or secondary vocational education (owning highly qualified professions). In addition, they can only be used by people who officially have the status of unemployed.

2.3 Can «silver» education solve the problems of the «third age» people?

Attitudes to education and readiness to be included in its different kinds and forms serve as one of indicators of the ability of the older generation to use educational resources for adaptation. Our survey showed that a little more than half of the older generation (52%) of the Sverdlovsk region has a positive attitude to education at this age and only 18% – negative one. 30% of respondents could not clearly assess their attitude to getting education at an older age. The dependence of the relationship on gender, level of education, age and place of residence was revealed. The survey confirmed that more positive attitude to the education of women (Cramer's coefficient: 0,34), people under the age of 60 years (Cramer's coefficient: 0,327) with higher education (Cramer's coefficient: 0,35) and the inhabitants of the megalopolis and major cities of the region (Cramer's coefficient: 0,364). The data obtained in general positively characterize the older generation of Sverdlovsk region residents against the background of the results of all-Russian surveys conducted in previous years.

Thus, a study by the Public Opinion Foundation in 2015 showed that overall 61% of Russians do not want to study. They are satisfied with the level of education they already have, so they do not want to take additional courses and gain new knowledge and skills. Most often, this position is held by the older generation: at the age of 31 this indicator is typical for 51%, from 46 years – for 81%, and from 61 years – for 90%. Also citizens who do not have secondary vocational or higher education are more likely to oppose further education.

Our research has revealed the reasons for the lack of the «third age» people desire to raise the level of education. Among them: assurance in the sufficiency of education (43.4%), lack of material opportunities (28.6%), lack of time (20.1%), health problems (20.4%). Note also the lack of faith in the prospects of solving own problems through education (25.8%) and dissatisfaction with the existing opportunities and conditions for education (10.1%). The respondents' opinion on the resource potential of education is shown in table 4.

Tab. 4: Older people's opinion on the resource potential of education in old age, in %

	<i>Education for you is...</i>	<i>%¹</i>
1	The opportunity to expand their knowledge, horizons	48,5
2	The basis of success in life	40,7
3	The key to material well-being	36,4
4	The opportunity to get the desired profession, interesting work	31,6
5	The opportunity to reveal my abilities, talents	24,7
6	The protection against unemployment, increase of competitiveness in the labor market	17,7
7	The possibility of status promotion	12,6
8	The possibility to engage in mental rather than physical labor	11,7
9	Waste of time, effort, money	4,7
	Subtotal	228,6

Source: data of the authors' survey

According to table 4, older people see the ability of education to improve the quality of their personal lives first (positions 1, 2, 3, 5), and second – the labor and professional activities (positions 4, 6, 7, 8). It seems that the share of people who do not consider education as a resource is small (position 9). Meanwhile, in fact, skepticism about education is present in the minds of many more people of the «third age». According to the study, 25.8% have no faith in the prospects of solving their own problems through education. This shows the complexity and contradictory of consciousness of older people.

Still there are more people (56.5%) who believe that education in older age helps to solve some problems. Among the most solved (and most likely the most acute) were highlighted the problems of employment and personal life (tab. 5).

Tab. 5: Older adults' opinion on problems that can be solved through education, in %

<i>Problems</i>	<i>% of respondents²</i>
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¹ The amount exceeds 100%, as one respondent could give several answers at the same time. The average number of responses per 1 respondent is 2.3.

² The amount exceeds 100%, as one respondent could give several answers at the same time. The average number of responses per respondent is 1.5.

Employment opportunity	62,6
In the field of communication	40,9
In the field of leisure	29,8
In family life	15,3
Other	2,5
Subtotal	151,1

Source: data of the authors' survey

2.4 Why do Russians of the «third age» need education?

Functions of the «silver» education are: rise of qualification to continue working; getting a new profession; creative self-realization; psychological and social adaptation to retirement; improving the quality of leisure; mobilization of human capital of the older generation. The opportunities of «silver» education in Russia only partially correspond to the designated functions. Ideally, education should be an intangible asset of different forms and kinds of professional, intellectual, cultural, leisure and civic activities of the «third age» community.

We have analyzed the educational programs implemented by various government agencies (social protection services, departments of labor and employment). It showed that most of the programs are entertainment and covers only active older people. The second group of educational programs (in smaller quantity) is connected with additional professional training and retraining, training of computer literacy. Education for the involvement of the older generation in public life is implemented non-systemically and only by non-profit organizations. The training programs for «silver» volunteers are only ones that have a civil orientation. By the way, it is supported by the state in its own interests.

Our survey showed the educational priorities of the «third age» people. About half of respondents (48.9%) believe that education is an asset for employment or continuation of employment. 28.9% of respondents evaluate education as a resource for improving the quality and diversity of leisure. For 21.3% of older people it is necessary for communication, and for 12.9% – for inclusion in public activities. Thus, we see a discrepancy between the educational priorities of the older people and the opportunities of «silver» education. Statistical analysis of the survey data on all variables showed a stable dependence of attitudes to education, confidence in its adaptive capabilities and willingness to be included in various types of education on gender characteristics, level of education, age and place of residence of respondents.

Conclusion

The study showed that the state policy in Russia does not fully provide opportunities for older people to receive education. It has a declarative character and does not create real legal, financial, organizational conditions for the development of «silver» education. Meanwhile, according to the survey results, more than half of Russians of the «third age» see education as a resource for solving their problems in the personal and labor spheres. This part of the older generation is ready to be included in the education of different kinds and forms, and so, to transform from a problem social group into a resource one. Our study educational needs of the older Russians shows the need to elaborate educational programs that have a professional, labor, intellectual, leisure orientation. This approach will ensure a systematic update of the educational capital of the older Russians.

Acknowledgment

The reported study was funded by RFBR, project № 19-011-00096.

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