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THE ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE, SUPPORTING THE GROUP CONVENORS AND RESOURCES OF THE UNIVERSITIES OF THE THIRD AGE IN THE UK

In this article, the organizational principles of the Universities of the Third Age in the UK are presented. The role of the Committee, supervisors and coordinators of this educational project for the people of the third age is defined. The influence of governance on the educational process at the University of the Third Age is determined. We also studied the main educational resources of these Universities which meet the needs and interests of the elder people for implementation the concept of their comprehensive self-realization. The worth ageing of the seniors should be supported by suitable environment for their successful self-fulfilment. Wellbeing of the people in the third age is followed by their self-satisfaction due to motivation for new achievements by finding the meaning of life, its goals and objectives. Social significance, importance and irreplaceability of the elderly help them to feel pleased with life and contribute much to their self-realization. Today, the seniors' active social life is limited, but it is very important for development of the elderlies' potential. The implementation of constructive strategies of aging in society could prevent it. The elderly people have many interests; they fully recognise the significance of human values. Also, the seniors positively perceive life, everything and everyone around. In the developed countries those seniors who study at Universities of the Third Age achieve full self-realization even after retirement. An elderly person is more socially active due to studying at these universities. The life quality of the elderly increases and they find their lost status in society there.

Key words: the United Kingdom, people of the third age, supervisor, coordinator, University of the Third Age, organization of educational process at the University of the Third Age, educational resources of the University of the Third Age, self-realization of people in the third age.

Introduction. The dynamics of modern life makes the issue of self-realization of the elderly urgent. The demographic aging of the population succeeds, causing the problem of self-realization in old age. Increase in life expectancy is one of the factors of demographic aging. Today, a person after retirement lives for many years more. We need to gain the objective knowledge about the elderly, their psychological and social welfare; environment for their personal development currently is of great importance. We should find ways for adjusting the process of development of an individual and the whole society, to increase the prestige of the elderly in it, to provide the opportunity for an elderly person for further self-realization and development of their own potential.

An **analysis of recent researches** suggests different approaches to the interpretation of the concept of self-realization of the third age people. Researchers reveal the core of their self-realization as the realization of person's own potential; creativity, search for the meaning of life, affirmation and realization of personal values; activity related to the objectification of human insight and other.

The article **is aimed at** studying theoretical matters of shared learning at the Universities of the Third Age in the UK for self-realization of the elderly. Defining the special features of self-realization process of the seniors at the Universities of the Third Age is the objective of this study.

Main material. Most developed countries paid attention to the problem of the education of the elderly much earlier than Ukraine did. Theoretical comprehension of the problem and its practical solution began in the 70s of the twentieth century. At that time, together with economic and social support, a variety of educational programs and projects were implemented for self-realization of the elderly. Education in old age is very

important for adaptation to age-related changes and also creates a new creative, experienced and proficient image of aging.

Every elderly person has some needs. Besides the main ones, which provide the physical activity, there are many others; a life worth living in the retiring age is also impossible without them. A person should be settled in life taking into account all the latest changes in their life, use all their natural abilities, fulfil oneself for the full satisfaction at the self-given entity. An elderly person, who realizes their abilities for the good of society, is the happiest one. The hardest thing is to find a field where it is possible to fulfil their potential at this age. Comprehensive active aging with no self-realization becomes only a survival. No satisfaction in the process of any activity can be gained without self-realization. Self-realization is a development of personal abilities; it leads a person to a happy and successful life [1].

In many countries, exercise and diet are common themes of preventative health programs directed at people of all ages. However, the benefits of cognitive challenge in later life are less tangible than those associated with exercise and diet. As a consequence it might seem unrealistic to suggest that large numbers of adults in their Third Age would be interested in taking part in systematic, intellectually challenging programs, particularly when, as yet, there are no clearly measurable rewards for doing so.

Nevertheless, this is exactly what is happening in many countries. A rapidly growing range of adult education programs for older people is now available specifically to meet the needs and interests of older learners. Of these, probably the best known is the University of the Third Age (U3A) which has emerged as an international adult education success story for older learners [2].

After the status of an elderly person changes they

have much free time and independence to engage in new activities. So, the task of the Universities of the Third Age is to manage such events, arrange the landscape for realization of their concealed abilities, to encourage the development of   human potential of the elderly [3].

The goals of the University of the Third Age are the implementation of the principle of lifelong learning for the elderly people, arrangement of cultural and leisure activities and support of their physical, psychological and social abilities.

This educational project should:
• Create all the necessary facilities and encourage comprehensive development of the elderly;
• Reintegration of the people in the third age into active social life;

Help the elderly people to adapt to modern life style by gaining knowledge about special aspects of aging, fundamentals of legislation on the elderly, etc. [4].

In his book, A Fresh Map of Life, Laslett puts into perspective a number of recent demographic and sociological changes which have given rise to the comparatively recent phenomenon of the Third Age. Until the first half of this century adults spent virtually all their lives in the Second Age, working and caring for family. They then entered the Fourth Age, a period of dependency and decrepitude prior to death. A fundamental change in this centuries-old pattern began to emerge in many countries, from around the 1950s. Then, for the first time in history, a combination of compulsory retirement, pensions and increased longevity resulted in the great majority of older people in industrialized countries spending many healthy, active, and potentially self-fulfilling years in the Third Age [5].

Recent research is beginning to reveal a number of intriguing links between an individual's well-being and activity patterns during the Third Age. For example, measurable beneficial changes in the musculo-skeletal system can be achieved through a combination of sensible diet and exercise [6]. Another correlate with modifiable health is identified by MacNeil and Teague who point to studies which consistently show that "...healthy active people who continue their intellectual interests as they grow older tend to maintain and even increase, various dimensions of cognitive functioning" [7].

THE ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE. All members of a U3A committee are de facto trustees of their own U3A. This means they are legally obliged to ensure that all the activities of their U3A are carried out in pursuance of the Objects or Purposes as stated in their constitution. The model constitution, approved by the regulatory authorities for use by U3As in the UK, states the aim of each U3A is: *To advance education, in particular the education of people not in gainful employment who are in their third age (being the period of time after the first age of childhood dependence and the second age of full-time employment and/or parental responsibility).*

All U3As sign to uphold the Objects and Principles of the U3A movement which were revised by the Third Age Trust in January 2014.

The Trustees of the Third Age Trust are similarly obliged to ensure the compliance of their members, the individual U3As, with the charitable purposes and objects of the movement. Whenever a new member of the committee is appointed, he or she should become familiar with the constitution and in particular the aims

as stated, as well as the Objects and Principles. A good practice would be for the committee to carry out a review at the first meeting after every AGM. In such a review the committee, led by the Chairman, might ask the following questions:
• Do we seek to enable our members to meet for the purposes of learning?
• Do all our activities encourage a learning element?
• Do we seek to provide opportunities for other third agers to join our U3A?
• Do we adequately support those members who organise our Interest Groups?
• Do we have a Groups' Co-ordinator and, if so, do we support him/her inevery way we can?
• Learning activities should be enjoyable, but are we sure we have the balance right?
• Are we open to new ideas? Do we actively seek new ideas?
• Are our members able to participate fully in all our activities?

Are we enablers, in line with the U3A's Objects and Principles, expecting our members to take a more active part and to contribute to the activities?[8].

SUPPORTING OUR GROUP CONVENORS

1. Our Self-help Method. The ethos of U3A is participation, not the conventional teacher/class relationship. Members who lead our interest Group sessions will come from a range of backgrounds. Experience has indicated that many who could volunteer to become a Group Convenor refrain from volunteering because they feel they have no appropriate experience and know of no available support. Many U3As feel that Convenors are a group in themselves and need to get together to share ideas, discuss problems and find solutions (participation). Do those involved with running and/or promoting Interest Groups need to meet on a regular basis?

Consider:
• Is it easy to recruit new Group Convenors?
• Do you have new Interest Groups starting at fairly regular intervals?
• Are Group Convenors aware of issues that need to be addressed?
• Is your ratio of Interest Groups to members sufficient? According to the 2013 Interest Group survey, the national average is one Interest Group for every seven members.
• Are your Group Convenors happy and do you consult them often enough to find out?
• Do your Interest Groups understand and follow the U3A ethos?
• Are your Interest Groups aware of the support that is available from the Third Age Trust, the region and the networks?

If the answer to some of these is no, then maybe there is scope for regular meetings.

2. Support Mechanism. Many U3As, regions and networks have regular meetings for their Group Convenors and Groups' Co-ordinators in order to support the work of those who are the very backbone of the U3A movement. The advantages of such meetings are generally thought to be:
• Mutual support
• Ongoing development within Interest Groups
• Keeping enthusiasm alive through varied approaches to learning

- Reinforcement of the U3A ethos
- Induction of new Group Convenors
- Recruitment of additional Group Convenors who appreciate that a support model is in place.

3. Organising Regular Group Convenor Meetings. In order to minimise dissatisfaction it is important to make the style and format of meetings clear, to ensure the participants know what to expect. This means that the organisers need to decide on the level of structure they wish to implement and this level needs to be suited to the purpose of the meeting.

Meeting styles will vary according to the perceived needs of the meeting.

These three categories (below) are intended as general indications of meeting styles. What seems to be most effective is that the organisers decide on the outcome that they wish to achieve and match the meeting style to suit it. There is no one size which fits all formats and mix and match may be the most suitable style. Discussion is usually based upon small groups discussing different topics and, perhaps, rotating through a programme of issues.

Generally, meetings are organised on a continuum from minimum structure to maximum structure (see tables).

Minimum Structure	Middling Structure	Maximum Structure
− No pre-determined input. − Open/Free discussion, often in groups, on general or varied topics supplied by organisers or culled from participants. − A summary of the discussion is then circulated to attendees.	− A short general presentation to provide a thematic focus or information. − Directed discussion, often in groups, on topics related to the theme or subject of the meeting. − Some decisions are made or conclusions are drawn and then circulated to the attendees.	− The meeting has a theme or focus that has been publicised in some detail. − A presentation will provide a thinking model and material that will inform the subsequent discussion. − Topics are prepared for discussion and processing, usually in pre-arranged groups, in accordance with the planned outcome of the meeting. − Policy or support is agreed and circulated to the appropriate target audience.

If successful, a meeting of Group Convenors should provide the topics or themes for further meetings to explore ways in which support can be developed. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of the various meeting structures.

Minimum Structure

Advantages	Disadvantages
− Informal atmosphere. − Everyone has a chance to speak. − Networking and informal exchanges of ideas are easily achieved. − Less work for the organisers. − A wide range of topics can be covered. − Outcome will be defined by the meeting.	− A few people can dominate. − It can result in a repeat of the same old topics/ anecdotes. − If a whole day in duration, non-stop discussion groups can become tedious. − Success depends, very much, upon having the answers and quality information in the room. They might not be there!

Middling Structure

Advantages	Disadvantages
− A short presentation gives a lead and sets the tone. − Discussion groups can benefit from being given a range of discussion points. − Notification of these points beforehand can aid productive discussion. − Differing activities throughout the meeting keep participants more alert. − It can produce a more focussed outcome.	− This format is more work for the organisers than the Minimum Structure format. − Some participants can always object to being organised. − There will be less time for networking and open discussion. − Topics for discussion are decided prior to the meeting and therefore limited.

Maximum Structure

Advantages	Disadvantages
− It can address identified issues with minimum distraction. − It can produce positive 'grass roots up' results in the way of policy, advice, support and solutions. − It ensures the relevance and accuracy of the information disseminated (as much as is possible). − Can be stimulating as it ensures the introduction of material that will be new to, at least some, participants.	− It requires well-researched resources and excellent administration so is more work for the organisers than the other formats. − Some participants will not like the formality. − It has the minimum time for networking and open discussion. − The programme is limited. − It can feel too much like being back at work!

4. Possible Discussion Topics

The following examples have been found to be useful at Group Convenor meetings. The list is by no means exhaustive but is passed on in the best tradition of U3A, sharing that which might be of use.

4.1 General Topics

• The Groups' Co-ordinator's Role.

Do all U3As need a Groups' Co-ordinator? If not, why not?

What do they do?

Should they have a 'tool kit'?

What could go into such a 'tool kit'?

What is their relationship with other U3As?

• The Group Convenor's Role.

How do we Find Group Convenors?

How do they get started?

How do they keep things going?

Do they need a handbook?

What are the different methods of running a group?

Are groups permanent or time limited?

• Finding Information. How can you make use of:

− U3A Resource Centre?

− National Subject Advisers?

− Sources Educational Journal?

− Online courses?

− Shared Learning Projects?

− Local U3As?

− Summer Schools – national and regional?

− Members' own skills?

− Wiley's 'Older and Wiser' series of books?

− University/college/school links?

− Open University?

− BBC material?

− The Internet?

− Libraries and museums?

− National Trust and English Heritage

− Books?

• Coping with problems.

Who should deal with common problems such as:

− Organising finances?

− Ailing groups?

− Disruptive members?

− Poor attendees?

− Non-participative members?

− Overly vociferous members?

4.2 Single Issue Discussion Topics:

• How could we encourage suggestions for new Interest Groups and therefore keep our U3A lively and dynamic?

• How can we encourage sharing the responsibility for running the Interest Groups?

• What strategies could be put in place to manage finance within the Interest Groups and to provide support by and for the committee?

• How can we maintain vitality and enthusiasm over time?

• How do we deal with an Interest Group that is too popular?

• How can we encourage group members to participate whilst ensuring we do not push them out of their comfort zone?

• How can we ensure that Interest Groups follow the U3A ethos without becoming too heavy handed?

• What three main points should someone leading an Interest Group session have in mind as an informal code of conduct to ensure harmony as far as is possible?

• How do we cope with the group member who wishes to dominate?

How do we cope with inappropriate behaviour, such as constant complaining, off-colour jokes, overheated responses, sly digs at another member/the leader?[9]

RESOURCES

1. **Members.** The primary resource of any U3A is its own members. A well-organised group will attract a range of individuals with a correspondingly wide experience and it is this which provides the first source of knowledge and information for the group. The very fact that individuals are interested in the subject of the group activity means that some of them will know something about it already. They will probably be able to suggest lines of enquiry as well as sources of information.

2. **U3A Information.** If the U3A has been running for any length of time, one or other of the Interest Groups may have created an information file. If this has not yet been done, it is a good idea for Group Leaders to start producing such files now.

3. **Resource Centre.** For a great many groups the Trust's Resource Centre is especially helpful. The Manager of the Resource Centre is a highly trained librarian who is more than happy to advise enquirers by telephone or email. The Centre has a very large stock of useful non-book material. The most popular materials are DVDs and CDs, all available to borrow at no cost other than the cost of returning them by post. Details are to be found, together with a catalogue, via the national website and items can be ordered online.

4. **Sources.** The Third Age Trust also publishes an educational journal, *Sources*, three times a year. It is sent Free to anyone who receives *Third Age Matters*. Each issue focuses on a particular subject area and contains particularly useful and interesting articles by Interest Group members throughout the UK. All the back copies of *Sources are* archived and available to members on the national website.

5. **Subject Advisers.** Subject Advisers are individual U3A members who are willing to help within their own specialist area. They can provide information about suitable material for individual subjects. Contact details are available on the national website and in *Third Age Matters*.

6. **National Events.** Workshops, seminars and events often produce reports which contain useful information. These reports can be found on the national website. They may well quote verbatim from talks, demonstrations and lectures such as those given at the national conferences and AGMs. Many such events concentrate on specialist areas of knowledge and contain many nuggets worth digging for.

7. **Online Courses.** A wide range of untutored online courses is available to U3A members. Since 1999, there have been two main sources for courses devised and provided by U3A members. The first group of such courses, chronologically speaking, has been created by U3A Online in Australia (www.u3aonline.org.au). The second group has been developed by the Third Age Trust and can be found on the national website. The Trust's courses are free

of charge to USA members; access to the Australian courses requires a membership fee.

8. **Libraries.** Do not forget your local library service. In spite of severe cuts in recent years, the public libraries offer an enormous support to all members of the public. The librarians are very willing and able to help. In some cases they may even help find multiple copies of books and plays. Beware of copyright restrictions when using such material.

9. **Internet.** The biggest expansion of provision is to be found on the Internet. A word of caution here, however: do not blindly accept all the information you can find on the internet, but try insofar as possible to verify it by cross-checking. With that proviso, a huge amount of material can be obtained quickly and simply.

10. **MOOCs.** Since 2008, a number of universities and other educational establishments have produced Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). These are published on a number of websites under the Creative Commons Licence, which means they are free to use. Many such courses are highly specialised, as one might expect given their source. There are many courses of about ten weeks which were originally produced to support undergraduate learning from information technology and economics to science and philosophy. There are literally hundreds of such courses and a good place to start looking is on the Coursera website (www.coursera.org). In 2013 the Open University, which already offered Creative Commons material under its OpenLearn website, set up a separate body, FutureLearn which offers a diverse selection of free, high-quality online courses from some of the world's leading universities, many of them in the UK.

Local Associations. Specialist organisations such as local history associations, family history associations, local museums, county archives can provide useful information and sometimes provide speakers. A growing source recently has been the local universities; close connections may yield such privileges as use of the university library, or even in some cases, free access to undergraduate lectures [10].

The right to education is one of the fundamental human rights. It cannot be age restricted, which implies lifelong learning and its continuation in the elderly age.

Education in the third age does not intend to get any profession. It is a kind of non-formal education for personal development of the elderly people and supporting their active aging. Education of the elderly improves their life by implementation of communicative, educational, social and psychological development and social cohesion [11]. The University, which teaches subjects including craft and computing, uses a 'learning is for pleasure' approach – meaning no accreditation, assessment or qualifications. All older people should have the opportunity to take part in learning activities, to stimulate them, help them acquire new skills and to share ones they already have with others [12].

Conclusions. The worth ageing of the seniors should be supported by suitable environment for their successful self-fulfilment. Wellbeing of the people in the third age is followed by their self-satisfaction due to motivation for new achievements by finding the meaning of life, its goals and objectives. Social significance, importance and irreplaceability of the elderly help them to feel pleased with life and contribute much to their self-realization. Today, the seniors' active social life is limited, but it is very important for development of the elderlies' potential. The implementation of constructive strategies of aging in society could prevent it. The elderly people have many interests; they fully recognise the significance of human values. Also, the seniors positively perceive life, everything and everyone around. In the developed countries those seniors who study at Universities of the Third Age achieve full self-realization even after retirement. An elderly person is more socially active due to studying at these universities. The life quality of the elderly increases and they find their lost status in society there.

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РОЛЬ КОМИТЕТА, КООРДИНАТОРОВ ГРУПП И РЕСУРСЫ УНИВЕРСИТЕТОВ ТРЕТЬЕГО ВОЗРАСТА В ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ

В статье раскрыты организационные основы деятельности Университетов третьего возраста в Великобритании. Охарактеризована роль и место Комитета, научных руководителей и координаторов в организации проектов обучения людей третьего возраста. Определена роль самоуправления в организации учебного процесса в университетах третьего возраста. Осуществлен анализ основных ресурсов обучения в университетах третьего возраста и их соответствие потребностям и интересам пожилых людей для реализации концепции их полноценной самореализации.

Ключевые слова: Великобритания, люди третьего возраста, организация учебного процесса в Университетах третьего возраста, самореализация людей третьего возраста.

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РОЛЬ КОМІТЕТУ, КООРДИНАТОРІВ ГРУП І РЕСУРСИ УНІВЕРСИТЕТІВ ТРЕТЬОГО ВІКУ У ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНІЇ

У статті розкрито організаційні засади діяльності Університетів третього віку у Великій Британії. Схарактеризовано роль і місце Комітету, наукових керівників та координаторів в організації проектів навчання людей третього віку. Визначено роль самоврядування в організації навчального процесу в Університетах третього віку. Здійснено аналіз основних ресурсів навчання в Університетах третього віку та їх відповідність потребам та інтересам літніх людей щодо реалізації концепції їхньої повноцінної самореалізації.

Ключові слова: Велика Британія, люди третього віку, організація навчального процесу в Університетах третього віку, самореалізація людей третього віку.