**AGEING SOCIETIES IN POLAND AND IN UKRAINE:**

**NEW CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATIONAL SECTOR**

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The beginning of the 21st century may be defined as the time of global changes. Scientific-and-technological advance and socio-economic development have led to the significant changes in characteristics and intensity of demographic process. This has given rise to the complex and contradictory matter of grave consequences, which have to be assessed uppermost from the position of long-range planning. These days there is no ignoring a demographic factor in a long-range social and economic planning as it can complicate substantially the solving of many problems the society will face in the future.

Socio-economic and demographic processes are considered to be an interrelated system in which socio-economic process is signified as the determinative one. But then, the demographic processes, especially their changes, affect substantially on socio-economic development. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the patterns and consequences of the demographical changes which have taken place recently. The influence of demographic factors on socio-economic development is especially appreciable in the crucial period of society’s progress. This point refers, first of all, to such a complex phenomenon as ageing population and its aftereffects.

While considering this social phenomenon, it is necessary, firstly, to give its definition; secondly, to find out the reasons of its origins in the past, present and in perspective. It is also important to answer if this phenomenon would be developing as a permanent or temporary demographic situation.

According to a variety of research and the statistic data, a demographic revolution has been occurring worldwide. It is the revolution from a demographic regime of high fertility and relatively low mortality to a regime of low fertility and low mortality, especially in developed regions, which results in slow growing population and its ageing. Many appreciable investigations on demographic changes prove the 21st century to be a turning point in the age structure of the world population and the prognosis show that elderly cohort is increasing dramatically.

As it is interpreted in a dictionary, *population ageing* is the increase in the number and proportion of older people in society. Population ageing has three possible causes: migration, longer life expectancy (decrease in death rate) and decrease in birth rate [18].

It is necessary to note that most commonly accepted measure of population ageing is by evaluation of the percentage of people aged 60 and over in the total population structure. The vital senility threshold, according to the demographists of UNO, makes 7% of all 65-year old people and over, in comparison with the total population, or 12% of all 60-year old people and over, according to Polish demographist E. Rosset [14].

The concept of *“a person of older age”* is quit ambiguous, so it is necessary to give the definition of older age. “Old age consists of ages nearing or surpassing the life expectancy of human beings, and thus the end of the human life cycle” [18]. Terms for old people include, *old people* (worldwide usage), *seniors* (American usage), *senior citizens* (British and American usage), and the *elderly*. In the social sciences the term *older adults* is more common. The official definition given in Oxford Dictionary is as following – “the later part of life; the period of life after youth and middle age…, usually with reference to deterioration” [12].

There is no any universal definition of when old age starts but the UNO (United Nations Organization) has agreed and it is generally accepted that 60+ may by indentified as a guide for working definition of old age. However, the WHO (World Health Organization) considers 50 to be set as the beginning of old age. At the same time, WHO recognizes that when it comes to defining old age it is very important to take into consideration not only the age (years) a person has reached, but a social aspect as well – loss of previous roles and attain of the new ones, ability or inability to make active contribution to society. In the majority of more developed regions, chronological time plays a permanent role. The age of 60 or 65 years, roughly equivalent to retirement ages, is recognizes to be the beginning of old age [20].

In social and educational gerontology a Four Age Framework has been used for the interpreting of life course:

* The First Age – a time for growing up, Preparation.
* The Second Age – a time to establish ourselves, Achievement.
* The Third Age – a time to change course, Fulfillment.
* The Four Age – a time for integration, Completion [13].

It is essential to note that in 1991 P. Lasslett introduced the “stage” method into British civic life, developing the concept from French idea:

* the First Age of socialization;
* the Second Age of work and child rising;
* the Third Age of independent post work [9, p.12].

This three-part format is commonly accepted in most researches on social and educational gerontology, and the term “third age” is used for the age of 50 – 75, especially when viewed in social aspect, as an opportunity for travel, further education etc.

 According to UN demographic studies, life expectancy at birth, especially in Europe, has shown an increase of 20 years in the first half of the century and now makes 68 years old. And this increase is expected to rise by 10 more years until 2050. People live the longest lives in Scandinavian countries and in Australia (over 80), West European countries, Japan, New Zealand, and Canada (over 78). In East European countries the average figure is 74, in Poland – 71 and in Ukraine – 69 [5].

Social, economic and cultural changes of the 20th century facilitated the rise of living standards, the improving of medical care that influenced upon significant increase of life expectancy. The increasing old-age population ratio occurs at the demographic level in many countries. The vital senility threshold was first overdrawn by France (1870), then by Great Britain (1931), Germany (1937), the USA (1940), and Poland (1967), (Rocznik Demograficzny, 2010) [20].

In 1950, the world’s population reached 2.5 billion people, and people aged 20 and younger made 44% of the total population. Approximately 8% was 60 years of age and older and only 3% formed people aged 70 and over [2]. The following table shows that more developed regions (Europe, Northern America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand) had significantly higher percentage of the elderly in their populations, than less developed regions had (11.7% compared to 6.4%).

**Table 1. Population Distribution by Age Groups, 1950 and 2050**

Sours: UN Demographic data

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Geographic area** | **Popula-tion, thousand** | **1950****% of total population** | **2050****% of total population** |
|  | **Total** | **0-19** | **20-59** | **60+** | **70+** | **80+** | **0-19** | **20-59** | **60+** | **70+** | **80+** |
| World total | 2.523.878 | 43.9 | 48.0 | 8.1 | 2.9 | 0.5 | 27.4 | 51.9 | 20.7 | 10.4 | 3.4 |
| More developed regions | 812.687 | 35.7 | 52.6 | 11.7 | 4.8 | 1.0 | 22.6 | 46.2 | 31.2 | 18.6 | 8.0 |
| Less developed regions | 1.711.191 | 47.8 | 45.8 | 6.4 | 2.1 | 0.3 | 28.0 | 52.7 | 19.2 | 9.2 | 2.8 |
| Europe | 547.318 | 34.6 | 53.3 | **12.1** | 5.1 | 1.1 | 21.6 | 45.6 | **32.8** | 19.2 | 7.9 |

The forecast to 2050 shows that the percentage of the world’s population aged 60 years and over is expected to be about 21% – at the level of Europe presently; the percentage of the people aged 65+ will rise to 16% of the total population. The ratio of older people in developed regions is expected to grow to 31.2% - almost the third of the population; for Europe the ratio of the elderly aged 60 and over is predicted to reach 32.8% which means one in three persons will be over 60 years old [5].

The researches on demography and social studies has concluded that on the one hand, increase in longevity is “… one of the most amazing demographic facts in modern history” (Sadler), people live longer and more active lives than ever before; on the other hand, ageing population:

* has influenced a change in the structure of population; the birth rates decrease and the consequence of rising human life expectancy has caused a change in the structure of life course;
* signifies a decrease in the percentage of the children and young people and an increase in the percentage of persons aged 65 and over;
* affects all aspects of the society including education, social and cultural activities.

According to “The Economist”, continued increases in longevity will ensure that the old-age dependency ratio, which measures the number of elderly people as a share of those working age, will rise sharply in most countries over the next 40 years, according to the European Commission. The chart bellow shows the biggest absolute increase will be in Japan, where the ratios of 35.1% in 2010, already the world’s highest, will more than double, to 73.8%, by 2050. At that point, the number of pensioners in China will be equivalent to 38.8% of its labor force, up from 11.6% in 2010. The European Union, which had 84.6 mln elderly people last year, will have 148.4 mln in 2050. And the ratio for the world as a whole will reach 25, 4%, up from 11.7% in 2010 [11].

**Chart1. Old-age dependency ratio: number of people aged 65 and over as % of labor force aged 15-64), forecasts.** Source: Old-age dependency ratios // www.economist.com

It is worthwhile emphasizing that all European countries are among the fifty demographically oldest countries of the world. As many researches point out, the percentage of people at older age 65 – 80 plays a major role from the perspective of socio-economic politics. We have to notice that the number of people aged 80 and over will increase in 2035 over two times from now and will make 2.574 thousand; two thirds of the elderly will live in urban areas [2, p. 20].

Analysis of demographic survey and the global foresight literature on the issue has found out that population of Eastern Europe is predicted to decline over the next 25 years. Low fertility rates and migrant outflows in the region are main reasons for this process.

Statistical data along with the information on age structure of population in Poland confirms the country’s continuing demographic ageing. The decline in fertility, the decrease in mortality and a life span extension – are at the bottom of this demographic shift. There are also some socio-cultural factors which have affected the situation – the popularization of proactive lifestyle, raising the quality of medical service, higher standards of social care of the elderly, and education in later life. Poland crossed the threshold of the demographic old age in 1986.

**Table 2. Changes in the number of people aged 65+ in Poland in the years 2010-2035**

**(in thousands).** Source: GUS, 2009

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2010** | **2015** | **2020** | **2025** | **2030** | **2035** |
| 22.1 | 776.0 | **1 024.1** | 890.5 | 351.3 | 162.2 |

**Table 3. Number of people at the age 65+ falling on 1000 people at the age of 0-14 in Poland.** Source: GUS, 2009

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Total** | **Urban areas** | **Rural areas** |
| **2020** | **2035** | **2020** | **2035** | **2020** | **2035** |
| 1 179 | 1 851 | 1 345 | 1 986 | 957 | 1 669 |

The old age dependency ratio (people aged 60+ in the total population structure) in Poland showed 16.6% in 2000 and according to the demographic projection, this percentage will increase by about 10% by 2025, and reach 35.6% in the half of the century [19, p. 10].

At present, Poland ranks 31st position on the list of the world demographically oldest countries, with 17.4% of the people aged 60 and over in the total structure of its population.

**Table 4. Old age demographic dependency ratio in Poland in the years 2000 – 2050. UN prognosis.** Source: A. Kanios, 2012, p.11.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **% of the population of 60+** | **% of the population of 65+** | **Demographic dependency ratio** **(persons 65+ per 100 persons aged 15-65)** |
| 2000 | 16.6 | 12.1 | 17.6100 |
| 2010 | 18.8 | 13.0 | 18.0102 |
| **2020** | **24.8** | **17.4** | **26.0148** |
| 2030 | 27.2 | 21.4 | 33.3189 |
| 2040 | 31.3 | 23.3 | 37.3212 |
| **2050** | **35.6** | **27.9** | **50.0281** |

Population prognosis by the year 2035 states that changes in the intensity of births and deaths will show negative growth rate which will be deepening each year. In 2035 the majority of deaths over births will reach to 180 thousand, which results from a very low birth rate since 1990s and from the extension of duration of life [2, p. 45].

**Table 5. Anticipated duration of life in Poland until 2035. (Source: GUS, 2009)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Men** | **Women** |
| 2015 | 72.3 | 80.2 |
| 2020 | 73.4 | 80.8 |
| 2025 | 74.6 | 81.5 |
| 2030 | 75.8 | 82.2 |
| 2035 | 77.1 | 82.9 |

It should be taken into consideration that an average duration of life in Poland in 2060 will reach 82 years for men and 88 years for women [20, p.149]. The participation of advanced old age (80 and over) in general structure is a significant indicator of population ageing. According to the demographic projection, by the year 2035 the number of people aged 80+ will reach 568.8 thousand as compared with 173.6 thousand at present and 78.6 thousand predicted for 2020. The data of the old age population and its projection show two general old age features: feminization of old age (the prevailing number of women over the number of men in this age category) and extension of the advanced old age cohort (people aged 80 and over).

Ukraine is among the leading countries as regards the decrease in population. During 1996 – 2011 its population size decreased by 5.7 mln people [5]. Both reduction of the population and change in the demographic structure have led to the population ageing and to decrease in the number of people who could potentially be economically active fraction in the total population. As economically active cohort of population forms a country’s labor market its size changes influences the rate of economical growth.

The age structure of Ukraine population has shown a regressive type of regeneration: there are 6.5 million people aged 0-14 and 11.3 million retired people. At the same time the percentage of people aged 65+ makes 15.3%. According to UN classification, if the share of people 65+ exceeds 7% of the country’s total population, it is regarded as demographically old nation [14, p.175]. Thus, the population of Ukraine is estimated to be very old. As it is seen from the table bellow, the age structure of Ukraine is quite similar to that of Poland.

**Table 6. Age structure of Poland and Ukraine, 2013. Source: www.indexmungi.com**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Country** | **0-14 (%)** | **15-64 (%)** | **65 and over (%)** |
| Poland | 14.6 | 70.9 | 14.5 |
| Ukraine | 13.9 | 70.6 | 15.6 |

The determining factors which affect the demographical situation and population ageing in Ukraine may be specified as the followings:

* a drop in the birth rates and the fact that people get married latter in life which causes a decrease in the number of older people;
* a relatively high death rate, especially among the people of the middle age, high abortion rate and infant mortality;
* some social and economic reasons – low level of medical care, low income of people, especially of middle class, social vulnerability;
* migration of the population, the outflow of economically active cohort – youth and people of middle age.

The increase of old age dependency ratio influences the labor market and the economic development at all. The main effects of the reduction of economically active population as well as the population ageing are the following:

* Reduction in the number of working people against unemployed population that is dependent on the income of employed citizens. In 2013 the number of employed persons amounted to 20324.2 thousand people which made 44% of the total population. And this number is tending to decline, which means that the burden on this category of population will increase.
* The growth of the mean age of population. In 2004 in Ukraine the average age of the population was 39.1, in 2013 this figure increased to 40.1 years as compared with mean age 39.9 in Europe [11].
* The imbalance between supply and demand of labor on various economic activities and professions.

Those facts seem to be essential from the point of view of not only demographers but also economists, gerontologists, educators and social workers.

Thus, the result of the demographic changes leads to the conclusion that the growing age group of elderly people needs to be ensured the adaptation to rapid economic and social change. For each country it is important to contribute to overcoming the problems of social isolation of this category of people. The state policy needs rethinking in the approaches to human potential, recognizing seniors as a valuable part of social and even economic resources, as this cohort is going to win a significant place in demographical and social structure. According to W. Sadler, if we follow the usual decrement model of aging, the extra time could be spent experiencing decline, degeneration, disabilities, disease, and dependency that have defined usual aging up until now. People positively changing their lives after fifty are pushing scientists to redefine the second half of life and aging [13]. “People in older age want to feel useful; they also need to be aware that they still are an integral part of the society and that they have their own place in the family and the local environment” [19, p. 23].

It is important to provide the opportunity for the elderly to be active participants of country development process, including education and labor market. Encouraging people of the third age to educational activity may be an effective resource for social, economic and intellectual growth of the country and this idea should become one of the strategic directions of the state policy.

The theoretical interpretation of the subject and sense of education for old age people began in the middle 70th of XX century. It was the first stage of educational gerontology which determined its main target: to instruct old age people how to help themselves during hard life periods, how to be an active member of community and still have a strong hold over their life (McClusky). Other interpretations of education of old/third age people emphasize on striving for independence: learning of the third-agers is the process of self-development, self-realization and receiving some new experience (Groombridge); the activity that affords opportunity to control their own lives; the emancipation process, in some way, as old people will be able to cope with their problems themselves, shift for themselves, and to be inaccessible to another’s will (Phillipson) [1]. At present, the craving for independence is supposed as a prevailing tendency in education of the elderly.

The Third Age (50 to 75 years) has usually denoted a time of retirement. Researchers have discovered that the Third Age presents us with new possibilities in the life course which are of great importance to both individuals and society, stimulating the development of lifelong learning programs. People in their 50s are changing course to move towards new life peaks. This new trajectory in their life course is often called second growth, a process of renewal that transforms aging in the Third Age – a season in search of purpose, an era for extended self-realization (Freedman) [3].

According to the study of the place of an older person as compared to other age groups (provided by B. Szatur-Jaworska, P. Bledowski and M. Dziegilewska), the following factors were selected which have an impact on the place of an older generation in the social stratification: education, the length of work experience, a position in the family, profession, old age stereotype, health condition, current income, resources, retirement benefit system, the condition of public finances, and social redistribution principles. The review has shown that in Poland, pensioners suffer to great degree from poverty, while retired persons suffer to a lesser degree. Older persons living on welfare benefits are in the worst situation [15].

Many prominent researches believe that how people age is determined not so much by their genes but by the way they live that includes an opportunity for second growth, and is closely associated with lifelong learning. According to D. Garvin, people, whose lives illustrate growth, have been committed learners. They have been learning more about themselves, about opportunities and challenges, exploring new areas, and gaining new skills [4]. Their learning has not been just mental stimulation with an accumulation of information. Strategic learning includes gathering information, interpreting it, and then applying learning to new behaviors – the way they work and live [13].

It follows that a socially adopted person being on a pension, is a socially active person who acts under his/her own steam, who leads his/her life, making full use of his/her personal and professional experience and intellectual potential. The opportunities for gaining extra competence by people of the third age and developing their motivation for learning activity can be guaranteed by both non-governmental organizations and private educational sector, providing education in various disciplines as well as popularizing and promoting of different forms of intellectual, psychological and physics activity, adequate to the age, overall efficiency and interests of the people. Both international knowledge and special features of national gerontological education should be taken into consideration to create the effective educational conceptions and models of learning in retirement in the near future. Coming of an ageing society demands further changes. Gains in the productivity in the future will depend in critical ways on the retraining of older adults to adapt to the economy. “The challenge to education for an ageing society is an emphasis on lifelong learning among late-life groups. To respond to the new demographic and economic realities, educational institutions will have to develop new roles in recycling human resources in later life” [10, p. 191]. Higher education should redefine its role in human capital formation by retraining older people, teaching new life skills to cope with late-life problems, and offering opportunities for personal enrichment through learning of culture and arts. As it is expected by the year 2035, ¼ of the total population will be people aged over 65, so higher education will definitely no longer be a prerogative of declining cohort of young people. For this sector it is strategically important to adapt new educational philosophy and make changes in the policy, fundamental structure, financing, and curriculum.

Demographic change of the contemporary world requires a new policy for ageing and old people. As it is stated by A. Zych, in Poland optimistic, happy or active ageing has been discussed o lot Modern solutions are focused on the implementation of various assistance forms and support for older people, but at the same time, older adults education should be tied to self-help opportunity [20].

Analysis of the educational activity of the elderly in Ukraine has proven that development in this area is too slow; modern legislative basis has not been worked out yet; the opportunities of social partnership are not used. In both developed and developing countries elderly people are not of great value in the modern society. In other words, people of the old age are suffering from depreciation and isolation. This fact reflects some negative stereotypes of elderly people among the people of young generation. But for the last 15-20 years some significant changes have taken place in most developed countries, which have principally influenced the system of social welfare of old age people, state social policy, and changing of the deep-seated attitude to old-agers.

Since older people adaptation is realized harder under present-day conditions of social-economic and technical development, we can consider education as a successful adopting and developing mechanism, which is mutually advantageous and helpful for both the individuals and the society. It helps the old age generation of people to save themselves from social isolation and turn themselves for socially active and creative members of society.

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