



Knowledge Management for Knowledge Society and Intergenerational Education

Jana Goriup

University of Maribor, Slovenia

Vilma Alina Šoba

International School for Social and Business Studies, Slovenia

The impact of globalization on contemporary post-modern society in the light of an aging population requires methods and techniques of education that are appropriate for young people and reflect (or accommodate) intergenerational learning. The purpose of this paper is to analyse, through empirical research and study of literature, the context of the elderly who are too often marginalized and to show the impact of the knowledge of society based on the use of modern information and communication technologies, on intergenerational learning. The authors analyse some of the consequences of the demographic changes and highlight the role and importance of intergenerational learning and collaboration for sustainability, especially in the Slovenian ageing society. We identify the role and importance of intergenerational learning for coexistence of generations. In the analysis of the empirical data of the conducted research, we conclude that the effectiveness of the knowledge society is influenced by both: the globalization processes and the intergenerational integration, as well as (and in particular) the cultural capital of younger generations and, last, but not least, the willingness of all generations to participate in the transmission and acquisition of knowledge.

Keywords: elderly, (social) integration, intergenerational learning, education, lifelong learning, knowledge society

Introduction

At the end of the 20th century and the ageing demographic compounds, together with other economic and political factors, optimal knowledge became only possible through the development of greater integration of all generations and increased solidarity among them. Above all, intergenerational learning strengthens the conditions supporting health, pension, and social security systems. Furthermore, through intergenerational learning, we create conditions to enhance the survival of health, pension, and social systems, while fostering the adoption of national strategies that will allow the survival and development of a society with an increasingly high proportion of old people.

The demographic indicators show how the world population is aging, emphasizing the increased importance of why modern society will be increasingly dependent on higher levels of intergenerational cooperation. Optimal medical care has resulted in longer life, and thereby in the increased share of the third and (already) fourth generation. At the same time, the birth rate has been declining as potential parents opt to delay or make more conscious and planned decisions for having children. This changing demographic is resulting in increased numbers of older people and defining differences between older and younger workforce. Above all, it is necessary to establish an environment in which each generation will overcome their respective intergenerational differences in order to improve their cooperation resulting in mutual benefit. Intergenerational learning is facing a problem due to the disruptive context of an increasing number of families with only (overworked) parents, more and more single-parent families and fewer extended families, which reduce the natural process of knowledge transfer between generations. Also, there is an increasing gap of intolerance between younger and older people, because today's fast pace of life inhibits contacts and interaction between generations.

The 21st century is a period that can be referred to as the rise of the intergenerational gap, which is mainly due to the demographic changes and the authority of knowledge. Hargreaves (2006, in Šverc & Rustja, 2007, p. 50) draws attention to the important dimensions of contemporary post-modern society, which stresses the importance of:

- Width – access to education, inclusive politics, ability to work with others;
- Long-term – learning as a lifelong process;
- Depth – quality learning, conditions for the development of children, pupils' potential;
- Fairness-equality of opportunity, positive discrimination;
- Diversity – respect for and appreciation of diversity, opening up different options;
- Ability to mobilize various resources (human, material), and
- Keeping and upgrading the sound of what has emerged in practice as well.

In such situations, intergenerational learning is even more important as it helps to balance the discrepancies between the generations, because it can overcome social segregation, as well as contribute to a better understanding and respect between generations. Furthermore, this contributes to the competence of an individual and his development opportunities, while enabling a more inclusive society.

The Characteristics of a Generation

A generation is commonly described as people who were born in a certain time period. In today's society, we commonly talk about three generations: the young, middle-aged, and older. However, a more detailed sociological analysis concludes that within such an important demographic definition of a generation, the time of birth in a given time period is common. Therefore, according to some authors (e.g., Lancaster & Stillman, 2002; Rojc, 2009, p. 1) age groups are divided into:

- Veterans' generation (from 1900 to 1943). In this case, morality, tradition, hard work, order, and rules play an important role.
- Post-war generation (including the generation of child welfare or 'Baby Boomers,' born between 1944 and 1960) – they are the first to take care of education, then a career and a family.
- Generation X (born between 1961 and 1980 in the period of economic uncertainty, economic recession, high unemployment, and inflation). At that time, the country was experiencing social and economic development with almost unwavering opportunities for education, employment, and personal development. High workload dictates their private lives, which contain increasingly less free time and more work in order to build a career. This generation is characterized by some flexibility and willingness to face changes, as the generation grew up in the time of great technological development.
- Generation Y (born between 1981 and 1994, the younger generation in the labor market). Despite the highest level of education and quality of consumer knowledge, they are faced with unemployment. Furthermore, despite higher level of their education and occupational functional competence, they are dealing with acute environmental problems. We have been witnessing the information revolution and the growth of the Internet and other information technology.
- Generation Z (the generation of their children, 1994–2004). Also called the 'e-generation,' 'silent generation,' 'iGeneration,' 'net generation,' etc. It is very active in the educational process and it successfully utilizes all types of information technology. Despite all this, the quality of their verbal communication and direct contact is poor.

Different societies define in different ways which individuals belong to the elderly population. In most cases, the transition is determined on the basis of changes in the status and roles. Hooyman and Asuman (2009, p. 53) emphasize how society in general distinguishes between three types of elderly population, which:

Table 1 Crude Age Group and Population Aging Index, Slovenia

Age	1948	1953	1961	1971	1981	1991	2002	2009	2020	2040
0–14	28.4	27.6	27.3	24.1	23.0	20.8	15.3	14.0	14.2	12.1
15–64	64.4	64.8	64.8	65.9	65.7	68.0	70.0	69.5	65.4	58.9
65+	7.3	7.6	7.8	9.8	11.1	11.2	14.7	16.5	20.4	29.1

Notes Based on data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (www.stat.si) and Eurostat (ec.europa.eu/eurostat).

- is no longer economically fully productive, but is physically and mentally capable of performing daily tasks,
- is completely dependent, needs care, is marked as a social burden, and
- actively participates in social and economic system by engaging in farming, caring for grandchildren, doing household chores, while the parents are at work.

During the modernization period, wisdom and experience lost their significance as they became an increasingly irrelevant factor in gaining access to and control over important social resources. Consequently, this led to a reduction in the authority and undermining the importance of the status of the elderly. As Leo Simmons points out, modernization results in the loss of both political and social power and influence, which the older generation once had. A side effect is the generational separation, which is social, moral, and intellectual. Also, it occurs as the glorification of youth, as the embodiment of progress and success (Hooymann & Asuman, 2009, p. 48). The result of these changes was that the elderly were relegated to the ‘status of dependent social category’ as a part of a functionally differentiated system allowing the underestimation of the working abilities of the elderly and their consequent exclusion. The society started to introduce pension insurance schemes, which separated older people from the economically active population (Hojnik-Zupanc, 1999, p. 48).

While we know learning and retention changes with age, we cannot assume a single transition for all people. According to recent studies, healthy people at 90 years of age, when learning a meaningful material, are equivalent to younger people. If they are less successful, this is often because they are not used to teaching styles typical of schooling largely due to a lack of practice. Learning methods must be tailored to a particular age group (Požarnik, 1981, p. 18–37).

The Role of Inter-Generational Learning for the Elderly

The elderly population is increasing, which makes it essential to ensure that the attitudes towards this population are changed on a global level,

a change which can be achieved through education. Kump and Jelenc-Krašovec (2009) indicate that both learning and aging are somewhat socially constructed and that this cultural definition of age can play an important role in promoting or limiting human aspirations.

Inter-generational learning, as a lifelong understanding and as a generic term, means the entire process of human learning cultivation. It encompasses all forms of skills development, as well as the views of all generations to lifelong basis. In short, we might as well mark this as 'Learning for sustainability!' It can be experienced as such by the (otherwise different) generations in institutionalized circumstances or as a natural learning in life. In this way, the older generation does not only experience learning 'from birth to death' ('life-long'), but also as all-encompassing ('life-wide'), since education and learning are not limited to the selection of content, but encompass all desired learning content.

Learning and education are the same across generations through related activities; however, there are differences between them. Learning is a broad term, while education includes activities, which are included in a dedicated, pre-planned, directed, and usually linear educational structure. If learning is mainly organized by an individual himself, it is called (organized) self-directed learning; if it takes place with organized assistance from others, it is referred to as (organized) self-directed learning with the help of others (Jelenc, 2007, p. 6). A contemporary post-modern society requires a recognition that people of all ages should benefit from education, so it is necessary to consider the non-formal and informal forms of education regardless of the age group or generation. For this reason, more attention is paid to *lifelong learning*, even in old age.

In the implementation of many of the programs and researches that embody a stronger structuralization of education and learning of older people, education is increasingly seen as a need of the elderly. The focus is on the opportunities for 'successful' and 'active' aging in formal, non-formal, and informal contexts (English, 2005). The concept of learning is a consistent principle associated with the ad hoc context in which the acquisition of knowledge and skills is derived from everyday life. An individual acquires this kind of knowledge in occasional, independent, and sometimes subconscious learning. Informal inter-generational education provides a framework for the implementation of systematic and organized activities, which take place outside of the formal educational system. In a general sense, formal education represents a very structured, chronologically hierarchical education, and perhaps also an assessment of different levels of knowledge.

The elderly gain the most from the recognition of the non-formal system of knowledge and learning. In many organizations, the recognition of qualifications has been replaced by the recognition of work experience. This has

led to the underestimation of the praxis learning typical of the labor market and consequently to large discrepancies between actual and required formal employee education. There is also evidence of the lack of trust in the recognition of non-formal learning (Ivančič et al., 2007, pp. 15–18). Employees in institutions for the elderly should be incorporated into a wider range of additional qualifications and training to upgrade their current skills. This is the so-called narrow qualification, which defines the content of vocational qualifications. In this way, they would be included in the system of verification and certification of informal skills. Additional training improves their knowledge and develops their skills for life and work, as well as occupational mobility.

Inter-Generational Education: Taboos and Stigma

The control that assigns uniform roles to individuals regardless of their age, fails to recognize the individuality of each person. All individuals who reach a certain age are attributed the same characteristics. In this way, some stereotypes regarding the elderly population are increased among young people.

Role, identity, and self-esteem have a significant impact on the individual. Rosow (in Hazel & Schofield, 1999, p. 39) points out how the irrevocable loss of status upon retirement leads to the erosion of social identity and positive self-image. The elderly population thus faces some of the following problems:

- Loss of deposits excludes older people from significant social participation and devalues their contribution.
- Aging is the first stage of life with a systematic loss of status for the entire group.
- Individuals in our society are socialized to cope with aging.
- No specific roles for older people, consequently their lives become unstructured.

Categorizing and allocating roles contributes to the creation and consolidation of the belief that all members of a particular age group are the same. Uniform understanding of all age groups and representatives contributes to the maintenance and reinforcement of stereotypes and myths. If the society does not provide alternative roles for the lost roles, the situation for the elderly worsens. A lack of understanding of aging and age can be the basis for the creation of negative attitudes towards aging – gerontofobia – because we have a negative/stereotype image of the elderly population (Pečjak, 2007, p. 81). However, Ward (1978, p. 104) highlights the importance of activity in the form of continuing social activities. Some optimally

aging individuals stay active and resist the shrinking of their social world. Since self-esteem is associated with the elderly's multiple roles, dealing with the loss is also important. Further deposits are less traumatic as to prevent complete degradation of applications and replacing them with similar roles. In this way individuals retain their positive self-image, which was under threat due to the loss of roles, and because they are the centre of inter-generational education.

The collectivization of the age taboo has made it difficult for the older generation to recognize and accept aging as a natural phase of life. They deprive themselves of the special possibilities of life in old age. The younger generation pushes them to the margins of society. It is an anthropological root of marginalization of older people in the industrial-consumer society, where the elderly are more vulnerable to social isolation and marginalization. All three generations contribute to the maintenance of social pathology with fairly rigid patterns of life. By enforcing consumer values, the older generation caused the tabuization of age, while the younger and the middle generation have in this way enforced the tabuization of the old age and, by doing this, made it impossible for people to prepare for their own old age.

Social learning in intergenerational programs for quality aging enables the demolition of taboos through exercise. An experiential learning can be effective in small groups dominated by personal communication. For quality aging and inter-generational relations, it is necessary to establish such an intergenerational transmission of knowledge that covers both intellectual and emotional aspects.

The age taboo also influences communication between generations. Social learning in inter-generational programs for quality ageing enables the de-tabuization through an exercise where individuals reflect on their personal experience with an older person towards whom they have a positive attitude. This is *experiential learning*, which can be effective in small groups where personal communication prevails. To achieve quality aging and inter-generational coexistence (harmony), we must establish such an inter-generational transfer of knowledge that would encompass both intellectual and emotional learning – joined in a holistic experiential learning of all. Interactions between generations in a family are mostly set up spontaneously on the basis of living together. Whereas a new acquaintance helps the personality and attitudes of the individual's 'desire' to get acquainted with new people. Group activities, such as self-help groups, certainly help towards better interaction.

Young principles are grown quite ambivalent as a relationship to inter-generational learning. It critically evaluates the ability of their (elderly) family member in the transfer of knowledge to younger people. It is therefore important that the participants' intergenerational transfer of knowledge and

skills takes place in constant communication and conversation to share their views and also come up with solutions. However, for each generation it can be difficult to establish such relationships to suit everyone. The problem occurs (or is evident) mostly in the middle generation, due to workload demands, which force them to streamline their private life. The distance between generations can also be established due to intergenerational differences. It is more than obvious that such knowledge transfer, without adequate approach, leads to a cold, rational attitude.

In the process of intergenerational education, the elderly are exposed to prejudice and stigma which is, in part, due to the vulnerability of their social position. The age taboo still exists and does not allow for the possibility of exceeding the determination of the social status of the elderly. Therefore, the elderly, as individuals, must take care of their inner balance while helping those young who love and appreciate them and to whom they wish to transfer their knowledge and skills. Their quality of life largely depends on this, since the 'new' emotional support, which they experience in such interactions, has a significant impact on the personal space of elderly people, as well as on their physical condition. Individual diversity increases the breadth and quality of the contacts made in the process of creating intergenerational learning. This effectively reduces the identification of an individual to their environment.

The Role of Intergenerational Education

Through learning, individuals develop their social involvement in the community. Schuller, Preston, Hammond, Brassett-Grundy, and Bynner (2004, pp. 24–26) notes how the impact of learning can be seen at the individual level, as well as collective or community level. Intergenerational learning activities, which are related to the maintenance of social activity, can take place in many areas. They can act as key factory in maintaining clean environment, cultural life, the preservation of the community's mental health, values and understanding of the other, communication between citizens, etc. The autobiographies of people of different generations are formed through their learning experiences. This type of learning has significant importance for humans, as it is directly linked with their life experience. However, intergenerational education must include a dialogic process. All players are equal; it is a sharing experience. Learning in this way represents a dynamic collaborative relationship. It is active, collaborative, and reflective (Jarvis, 1994, pp. 6–20). Jarvis (1994) distinguishes three types of learning of elderly:

- *Wise men*, making the need to learn, they take advantage of any opportunity to engage in education, mostly in the process of transferring their knowledge to the younger.

- *Active men* that focus on developing their skills in various fields (e.g. art creation, gardening, sports, travel, etc.).
- *Men seeking harmony*, seeking to live according to the circumstances in a safe and peaceful environment to achieve inner peace. Therefore, they avoid new opportunities for learning, which is not in accordance with their self-esteem. These are mostly older adults who seek Erikson 'integrity' in their life and harmony with the rest of the world. This integrity includes the integrity 'of settling accounts with others,' the adaptation to victories and disappointments of life (Erikson, 1976, p. 117).

Performance strategies for empowering older people in educational activities are dependent on multiple factors. Still, there is a dominant view of learning as a precondition for acceptance and social inclusion, which includes good material and spiritual background that the elderly do not always have. The findings of numerous studies have confirmed the positive impact of education on health, social activity of the elderly, and their chances of gaining and maintaining power and influence (Cusack & Thompson 1998, pp. 307–317; Cusack, 1999, pp. 21–37).

More educated elderly are more empowered (or have greater self-efficiency) in communicating with health services. They are more emotionally resilient and are therefore more successful in enhancing their mental and physical health. They are also able to reduce their levels of morbidity of depression, have better self-esteem, greater independence, self-confidence as they are less prone to the vicious cycle of helplessness. The elderly have unique needs, which any treatment process needs to hold as a focus. The elderly are a wealth of life experience and acquired knowledge and can have a significant impact on the younger generation, especially as mentors. The importance of the elderly seems obvious in the following context of intergenerational education:

- '*Vertical integration*,' which is to continue learning throughout life and in all stages of development. Learning in this segment is as important for older adults as for other age groups.
- '*Horizontal integration*,' which involves the recognition of equal status, learning, no matter whether from formal, non-formal or informal contexts (life-wide).
- The third component called '*the democratization of the education system*' relates to equal opportunities to engage in education, regardless of gender, age, ethnic or religious affiliation (Kump and Jelenc-Krašovec, 2010, p. 7).

Discriminatory treatment of older people is reflected in the behaviour and

actual practice. According to the findings of psychology, learning ability does not deteriorate even with memory deterioration. The decline of memory functions occurs mainly in individuals with dementia. Crystallized intelligence and wisdom can grow. Wisdom refers to emotional maturity, ability to empathize, relativistic and dialectical thinking. However, these components have not provided any adequate social mechanisms for their realization. Key barriers are often 'age, malaise, forgetfulness.' These barriers are apparently internalized by the elderly and give them a seal of reality. Above all, it should be noted that today, the concept of learning is among the most emphasized intellectual importance factors. In fact, this is a gradual liberation from social learning frameworks and requirements as individuals increase the importance of individualization. It's about learning; the development of individual personality is limited to personal needs and interests (Illeris, 2004, p. 223). For older people, knowledge and skills are the means of taking ownership and control over their lives and of support in their social roles (Walker & Warren, 1996).

To overcome the age taboo, specific actions are required on the level of the individual. Older people must personally and consciously accept their age in an appropriate manner, as a process of personal learning and a natural function of life. The learning process for accepting one's age contains intellectual and emotional components, which together form an integrated experiential learning. Demolishing taboos can also be reached at the societal level with the possibility of people stepping on the path of social learning, thereby improving the quality of the aging process and the coexistence of generations (Ramovš, 2003, pp. 53–60).

Hojnik-Zupanc (1997, p. 49) mentioned a few starting points needed for the transformation from social marginalization of older people to greater social integration. If the educational level of the older population is constantly increasing, then individual responsibility for individual life requires greater familiarity with age-related changes. In particular, changes in the relations between generations influence the different role of kinship and societal engagement.

Many experts note that elderly are unjustly relegated from social events. The loss of engagement is detrimental to the health of the elderly. Their rights in terms of participation are often overlooked. This is considered as a risk to the social security system and as a factor that causes the growth of the cost of health and social services.

Improving social ties also improves the cognitive function of the elderly. Involvement in educational activities can be a source of well-being and can produce a sense of inclusion. An important feature of social support in illness is also a reciprocity exchange. It is one of the fundamental forms of a social bond. The elderly should also have the opportunity to take advantage

of the support mechanisms, social structures, and social recognition of their informal and unpaid participation (Pahor, Domanjko, & Hlebec, 2009, pp. 221–229).

Particularly important is the 'latent support,' which gives a feeling of security and belonging, for example support in health. Murphy (1982, pp. 135–142) notes that emotional support mitigates the destructive effects of stressful life events and the risk of depression. Namely, the risk of depression increases particularly in the elderly who are socially isolated. Emotional support is a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the well-being of older people. Thoits (1985) says that an important aspect of the quality of relationships is the one in which support changes. Social roles provide a range of identities, give us a sense of security, and protect us from feelings of fear and uncertainty. A key feature of emotional support, in his opinion, is a sense of belonging. Interpersonal relationships are closely linked with the social expectations and, in case of disregard, can become a source of stress and conflict. Since man is essentially a social being, interpersonal relationship is almost as essential as the basic physiological needs. It is important that the people protect their intimacy in material and personal lives, as well as in the field of human relations.

The third critical element represents communication, which is important in the implementation of social networking site programs such as self-help groups or professionally guided therapeutic groups. Communication in self-help groups takes place in a circle of confidentiality where human personal knowledge is related to its main life values.

Creating new social networks for generations can contribute to a higher quality of aging resulting in both greater personal freedom and autonomy for each individual within these respective generations. It is a conscious decision to engage in intergenerational friendship and cooperation. Intergenerational communication skills are based on the principles of social learning. New forms of coexistence of generations are formed. Younger seniors participate in the courses of social learning, while informal networks are set for satisfying the non-material personal needs in their old age, such as: organizations, clubs, pensioners groups, University of the Third Age, help and care for people living at home, and day centers for the elderly. Mutual exchange of life experiences is the connecting aspect of interpersonal relationships, cooperation, and solidarity. The property treasure accumulated with historical and cultural experiences of humanity and culture grows with each person and each generation. A human being constantly balances between fruitful personal intimacy in solitude and beneficial integration in the social network. Here, a close harmony in micro social groups represents the link between the two poles and combines the quality of both (Ramovš, 2003, pp. 104–200).

Knowledge can be gained through formal or informal aspects of learning or education. Learning is much broader than education. Education takes place consciously and deliberately; however, learning can take place randomly, at different opportunities and lasts throughout the entire life (Kokot, 2010). Kump and Jelenc-Krašovec (2010, p. 13) noted that learning is most often associated with ad-hoc contexts, it is about the acquisition of knowledge and skills derived from everyday life, which are acquired by random, independent, and sometimes unconscious learning.

The Findings of the Empirical Part

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of contemporary post-modern 'Knowledge society' on intergenerational cooperation, as well as the level of cooperation between generations. Also, we wanted to highlight the importance of intergenerational cooperation in all stages of life.

Our Approach as Method and Methodology

The study was based on an analytical study of purposefully selected domestic and foreign scientific and professional literature in the field of education, which relates to the problem of intergenerational coexistence that has been recognized as a global aim and socially desirable phenomenon. We used the following research strategy:

- Qualitative research characteristics of intergenerational cooperation.
- Comparative research diversity, which is reflected by comparing some of the obtained results.
- Quantitative research – relationship between two or more variables.

The following methods were used for the research: descriptive method, classification method, method of compilation, method of abstraction and concretization, and specialization method. For complete conceptualization of the research problem and the preparation of hypothetical research platforms, the methods of analysis and synthesis were used to evaluate all the relevant features of the research subject.

In order to obtain the desired empirical data, we used the survey method in the form of a semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire, which contained 38 questions divided into two parts, was sent to 250 randomly selected respondents in Slovenia. The questionnaire was distributed in an electronic format with the use of a special website. All age groups (15 and 65+) were included in the survey. 208 completed questionnaires were returned. The first part of the questionnaire contained general questions about the respondents and the second part contained problem-related issues.

Research Hypotheses

For the purposes of our empirical work, we set five basic research hypotheses, as we:

- H1 *Assumed that intergenerational cooperation and lifelong learning contribute to reduced tensions between generations;*
- H2 *Assumed that because of their negative views on the elderly, members of the younger generation are not willing to provide support to the elderly in their acquisition of information and communication technology, as this does not comply with the prevailing paradigm in the society that older people do not need this kind of knowledge;*
- H3 *Believed that in the Slovenian post-modern society and the changed role of generations, the role of an individual is no longer clearly defined in each life period, which results in the need for education for sustainable development;*
- H4 *Assumed that the quality of life of older people depends, to a large extent, on the incentives for engaging in active aging, and the availability of lifelong learning;*
- H5 *Assumed that in Slovenia, there is not enough public awareness regarding intergenerational programs and lifelong learning.*

Data Analysis

208 respondents took part in the survey of which 42 were men and 166 women. The average age of the respondents was 38.5 years. 20 respondents completed vocational and 28 secondary schools, 42 tertiary education, 6 unfinished college education, 88 respondents higher education degree, 14 respondents completed master's degree, and 10 respondents stated 'other.'

87.5 percent of the respondents stated that they were familiar with the term 'intergenerational cooperation.' For them, the term intergenerational learning means the transfer of knowledge between generations in families, businesses, as well as educational cooperation between two different generations in which case they assist each other.

There is a transfer of knowledge, cooperation among adults and adolescents. Based on the empirical data, we found that 50 percent of the respondents estimated that young people positively experience the third and fourth generation, while for 49 percent of the respondents, this experience is negative. 90.4 percent of the respondents estimated that they received a lot of useful knowledge from the older generation and 92.3 percent of the respondents answered that their knowledge was transferred to the younger generation through conversation.

47.1 percent of the respondents stated that they are happy to pass their experience and are proud to be able to transfer their knowledge to the younger generation, depending on the situation.

83.7 percent of the respondents believed that the young are willing to receive instructions from the older generation, but they must be attracted by both – the content and the method of instruction. 46 percent of the respondents believed that lifelong learning is essential for survival in the contemporary post-modern society. This only confirms our assumption that intergenerational learning is a need that has to enter into our lives.

51 percent of the respondents also estimated that, in the contemporary post-modern society, the roles of individuals are not as clearly defined as they used to be (education, employment, retirement) and, therefore, individuals in all stages of life and education are also active after they retirement.

According to 40.4 percent of the respondents, the people in Slovenia are under-informed about the importance of intergenerational education, while at the same time 31 percent of the respondents rejected this claim, which leads us to the conclusion that more intergenerational education will have to receive greater emphasis in the future. Especially, due to the fact that 69.2 percent of the respondents considered today's society to be termed as the 'knowledge society.' It is not insignificant that 66.3 percent of the respondents stated that the elderly are now more included in the lives of their grandchildren, which is undoubtedly a consequence of the way of living of both generations, as well as the age of grandchildren; namely, 94.2 percent of the respondents believe that in the past, generations were more connected, which was mainly due to a different lifestyle. 80.8 percent of the respondents also believe that (today) the third generation contributes most to the harmony and mutual understanding between generations and that the retired generation contributes more than the young.

30.8 percent of the respondents believe that the quality of interpersonal relations contributes to good intergeneration dialogue; 26 percent think that harmony is the result of a good intergeneration relationship, and 21.2 percent believe that the result of a good intergeneration relationship is, above all, easier and better life of all generations.

At the same time, 29.8 percent of the respondents highlight that young people and the elderly are not of the same opinion regarding what is best for the society; namely, 41.3 percent of them point out that the media are too exposed to the risk of conflict between generations as they mainly advertise youthful appearance and various products that would stop the aging process, which in turn creates a fear of aging and age taboo. A surprising finding is that 39.4 percent of the respondents disagree that companies, which mostly employ young people, do better business than companies, which employ people of different ages. Furthermore, 51.9 percent of the

respondents believe that local communities are entities, which should promote intergenerational learning in various ways. At the same time, they are enabling positive relationships between young and older people, as 56.7 percent of the respondents strongly agree that all life stages are equally important. It is therefore not surprising that 49 percent of the respondents estimated the level of public awareness regarding intergenerational programs and lifelong learning as rather low, and, therefore, highlight the need for more investment in intergenerational programs and lifelong learning programs, especially at the local level.

54 percent of the respondents emphasize the importance of mass media in representing the importance of the elderly in the Slovene society. 45.2 percent of the respondents also believe that younger people have an overly stereotypical view of the older people: they see them as weak, inactive, and forgetful – due to the fact that society emphasizes their weakness and attempts to apply the standards of other age groups to them. For this reason 65.4 percent of the respondents suggest that more attention should be given to the preparation of workshops on the topic of intergenerational learning for all generations. This is also because 49 percent of the respondents believe that the time a young person spends in the company with elderly is up to one hour per week, which is too little for intergenerational learning. Furthermore, 53.8 percent of the respondents perceive that the elderly spend together more than 3 hours per week. Therefore, 46.2 percent of the respondents believe that children in pre-school education should learn about the importance of intergenerational learning, the topics that they can learn from older people, and how important it is for the elderly to be able to learn from the young, especially in regard to ICT.

48.1 percent of the respondents believe that in post-modern Slovenian Society, all generations should be stimulated towards lifelong learning in order to become competitive. And, not lastly, 42.3 percent of the respondents agree and 40.4 percent greatly agree that the quality of our lives depends on whether we are prepared to learn on a continuous basis.

Conclusion

Therefore, if the environment is supportive and includes favorable motivational strategies to educate older people, it will affect their motivation and self-actualization. At the same time, it will encourage them to participate in various programs, activities, workshops, etc. An important reason for the current low level of participation of the elderly in education and learning lies in the cultural patterns of the dominant conception of age. Through education, these patterns could gradually be changed.

In Slovene post-modern society, a traditional concept of age still prevails, which could be described as a deficitary discourse in which the 'gray society'

is defined as a dramatic state of loss, and is therefore understood, above all, if not exclusively, as a problem. The elderly need to be informed about the possibilities and combinations of activities that suit them best and in this way attend to their real needs.

More should be done regarding the reconceptualization of aging and the elderly. The knowledge about older people should be disseminated as an important source of learning and community wealth. Meanwhile, the elderly are still subject of social constructs and prejudices about aging as a dysfunctional segment of social progress. It is also the responsibility of public policy makers to provide a framework for the promotion of active aging of older citizens. It would be necessary to strengthen the role of older people as important vectors of culture for the younger generation. With their knowledge, the elderly contribute to the growth of social capital in the community. Furthermore, with their knowledge and experience, we could create a shift in the social policy regarding aging, as well as overcome the obstacles to achieve optimal potential. Education undoubtedly enhances the number of the sources of social support, which is immanent in nature.

References

- Cusack, S. A. (1999). Critical educational gerontology and the imperative to empower. *Education and Ageing*, 14(1), 21–37.
- Cusack, S. A., & Thompson, W. J. A. (1998). Mental fitness: developing a vital aging society; *Mens sana in corpore sano*. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 17(5), 307–317.
- Erikson, E. H. (1976). *Omladina – kriza – identifikacija*. Titograd, Montenegro: NIP Pobjeda.
- English, L. M. (2005). *International encyclopedia of adult education*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hargreaves, D. (2006). *Personalising learning 6: The final gateway; school design and organisation*. London: Specialist Schools Trust.
- Hazel, H., & Schofield, I. (1999). *Healthy aging: Nursing older people*. London: Mosby.
- Hooyman, N. R., & Asuman, K. (2009). *Social gerontology? A multidisciplinary perspective*. 8th ed. Upper Saddle River, NY: Pearson.
- Hojnik-Zupanc, I. (1999). *Samostojnost starega človeka v družbeno-prostorskem kontekstu*. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Fakulteta za družbene vede.
- Hojnik-Zupanc, I. (1997). *Dodajmo življenje letom: nekaj spoznanj in nasvetom, kako se smiselno in zdravo pripravljati na starosti in jo tako tudi živeti*. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Gerontološko društvo Slovenije.
- Illeris, K. (2004). *The three dimensions of learning*. Malabar, FL: Krieger.
- Ivančič, A., Mohorčič Špolar, V. A., Vrečer, N., Svetina, M., Pavlin, S., Svetlik, I., et al. (2007). *Priznavanje neformalnega in priložnostnega učenja: aktivnost OECD 2006–2007; nacionalno poročilo za Slovenijo*. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje.

- Jarvis, P. (1994). Learning, ageing and education in the risk society. *Education and Ageing*, 9(1), 6–20.
- Jelenc, Z. (ur). (2007). *Strategija vseživljenjskega učenja v Sloveniji*. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport Republike Slovenije.
- Kokot, K. (2010). *Vseživljenjsko učenje kot (didaktično melodični) koncept tretjega tisočletja* (Unpublished undergraduate thesis). Fakulteta za družbene vede, Ljubljana, Slovenia.
- Kump, S., in Jelenc-Krašovec, S. (2009). *Vseživljenjsko učenje: izobraževanje starejših odraslih*. Ljubljana: Pedagoški inštitut.
- Kump, S., in Jelenc-Krašovec, S. (2010). *Prestari za učenje? Vzorci izobraževanja in učenja starejših*. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Filozofska fakulteta.
- Lancaster, L. C., & Stillman, D. (2002). *When generations collide*. New York, NY: HarperBusiness.
- Murphy, E. (1982). Social origins of depression in old age. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 141, 135–142.
- Pahor, M., Domanjko, B., & Hlebec, V. (2009). Zaznave zdravja in dostopnosti zdravstvenega varstva: mesto Slovenije v evropskih razdeljenostih. In S. Mandič & M. Filipovič Hrast (Eds.), *Blaginja v starajoči se družbi* (pp. 139–160). Ljubljana, Slovenia: Fakulteta za družbene vede.
- Pečjak, V. (2007). *Psihologija staranja*. Bled, Slovenia: Author.
- Požarnik, H. (1981). *Umetnost staranja*. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Cankarjeva založba.
- Ramovš, J. (2003). *Kakovostna starost: socialna gerontologija in gerantogogika*. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti.
- Rojc, U., & Ilič, B. (2009). *Vpliv medgeneracijskih razlik na delovanje organizacije: izziv za sodobnega managerja* (Unpublished undergraduate thesis). Ljubljana, Slovenia: Fakulteta za družbene vede.
- Schuller, T., Preston, J., Hammond, C., Brassett-Grundy, A., & Bynner, J. (2004). *The benefits of learning: The impact of education on health, family life and social capital*. Abingdon, England: Taylor & Francis.
- Šverc, A., & Rustja, E. (2007). *Medgeneracijska pedagogika v luči vseživljenjskega učenja*. Ljubljana, Slovenia: Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica.
- Thoits, P. A. (1985). Social support and psychological well-being: Theoretical possibilities. In I. G. Sarason & B. R. Sarason (Eds.), *Social support: Theory research and applications* (pp. 51–72). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Ward, A. R. (1978). *The aging experience*. New York, NY: Lippincott.
- Walker, A., & Warren, L. (1996). *Changing services for older people: The neighbourhood support units innovation*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

Dr Jana Goriup is a Full Professor of Sociology. Her research interest is focused on the problems of contemporary society and the role of ethics in sociology, particularly in the areas of education, family, women's health and diseases and medicine. She has organized several international scientific

conferences and symposiums; she was invited as a visiting professor at various foreign universities in Europe and Australia and USA. She has published several scientific and professional monographies and scientific and professional articles in the field, so her bibliographic work comprises more than 300 units. *jana.goriup@um.si*, *jana.puirog@gmail.com*

Vilma Alina Šoba graduated from the Faculty of Law, University of Maribor, where she is currently finishing her postgraduate studies in tax law. She is an assistant at the International School of Social and Business Studies, Slovenia. *vilma.alina.soba@mfdps.si*



This paper is published under the terms of the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).