

**KEY PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION OF THE «THIRD AGE»  
PEOPLE: RUSSIAN VARIANT**

*Garold Zborovsky<sup>1</sup>, Polina Ambarova<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia,  
e-mail: [garoldzborovsky@gmail.com](mailto:garoldzborovsky@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia, e-mail: [borges75@mail.ru](mailto:borges75@mail.ru)

**Abstract.** Changes in the population of the «third age» under the influence of the factor of education are considered. The necessity of creating a special system of «silver» education for these people is proved.

The purpose of our study is to identify the potential and opportunities of Russian education to create a holistic «silver» education in the country and to determine the readiness of people of the «third age» to improve their own educational level. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve the following tasks: 1) to identify regulatory and organizational opportunities to bring the Russian education system in line with the educational needs of society and the «silver» community; 2) to determine the readiness for interaction of educational structures and the «silver» community; 3) to show the trajectories, ways and forms of development of education «silver» community.

The strategy of the research included the use of the following methods: 1. Survey of representatives of the social community of the «third age», including people of pre-retirement and retirement age. 2. Expert interviews with representatives of educational, labor, non-profit organizations, authorities and their subordinate institutions (employment services), recruitment agencies working with the social community of the «third age». 3. Analysis of documents (normative and legal acts, state and municipal target programs, conceptions of social projects, media materials, social network content). 4. Analysis of statistical data (demographic statistics, statistics on education, labor market).

The analysis of statistical and demographic data shows the quantitative growth of the «silver» community. In 2018, the number of people of retirement age alone (men aged 60 and over, women aged 55 and over) was almost 37 million. In the next 5 years (until 2023) the number of «silver» community is projected to exceed a third of the country's population.

The «silver» community has a significant potential and growth resource in relation to secondary vocational and higher education. The results of our studies show a very contradictory attitude of people of the «third age» to increase their own educational level. On the one hand, a large number of Russians of pre-retirement age do not seek to study, improve their skills, get

a new profession. On the other hand, a certain part of the «silver» community has already formed attitudes and willingness to implement the strategy of active longevity, including through education. Hence, there is a public need to disclose the educational potential of the social community of the «third age» and the development of activities of state and non-state structures for its formation and use.

One of the key problems is the organizational structures of most Russian universities, institutions of secondary vocational and additional education are not adapted to the needs of «silver» students. In the context of the beginning of pension reform requires regulatory and legal provision of education for the «third age» people. There is a need for a well-developed law on adult education, which would stimulate the development of «silver» education as a special subsystem within the all-Russian education system.

Our analysis of various practices in secondary vocational and higher education organizations has shown that some of them have structures, units and groups of teachers focused on working with adult students. These are institutions of additional or continuing education. Cultural institutions also have non-formal education practices for the «silver» community, but they are clearly insufficient. However, studies show that there is no integral «silver» education in the country. An important key problem of education of the «third age» people is the readiness of the state, business and non-profit organizations to work on the problem of education for the «silver» community.

**Keywords:** population of the «third age», «silver» education, trajectories and forms of «silver» education, interaction of educational structures and of the «third age» people, normative support of the «silver» education

## **Introduction**

The Russian education system, despite the recognition of the value of continuing education and the need to develop adult education, is still focused on the young and to some extent the middle generation. There are separate educational structures and organizations that are engaged in education for the «silver» community. But there is no need to talk about a complete system of «silver» education, about the institutionalization of this type of education (Grigoryeva I.A. et al, 2015: 154–213).

There is a situation when a new pension reform in Russia begins to unfold in the conditions of institutional and socio-cultural unpreparedness of society to it. Another proof of this is the unsatisfactory state of education for the education of the «third age» people.

## **Purpose and objectives of the study**

The purpose of our study is to identify the potential and opportunities of

Russian education to create a holistic «silver» education in the country and to determine the readiness of people of the «third age» to improve their own educational level.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to solve the following tasks: 1) to identify regulatory and organizational opportunities to bring the Russian education system in line with the educational needs of society and the «silver» community; 2) to determine the readiness for interaction of educational structures and the «silver» community; 3) to show the trajectories, ways and forms of development of education «silver» community.

### **Methodology and methods**

The object of the study was the social community of the «third age» people (Laslett P., 1996: 21–38). The subject of the research is education as its intangible asset, social resource and attitude to its formation and use in the community, in state and non-state structures. The study used an interdisciplinary analysis of the social community of the «third age» and its resources. This analysis is carried out at the intersection of sociological, socio-psychological, gerontological, anthropological, managerial, psychological and pedagogical knowledge. The novelty of the methodology consisted in the use of common, resource, institutional, activity and temporal approaches taken in the relationship.

The strategy of the research included the use of the following methods: 1. Survey of representatives of the social community of the «third age», including people of pre-retirement and retirement age. 2. Expert interviews with representatives of educational, labor, non-profit organizations, authorities and their subordinate institutions (employment services), recruitment agencies working with the social community of the «third age». 3. Analysis of documents (normative and legal acts, state and municipal target programs, conceptions of social projects, media materials, social network content). 4. Analysis of statistical data (demographic statistics, statistics on education, labor market).

### **Results**

1. The analysis of statistical and demographic data shows the quantitative growth of the «silver» community. In 2018, the number of people of retirement age alone (men aged 60 and over, women aged 55 and over) was almost 37 million. People of pre-retirement age (the nearest reserve of the «silver» social community) – men from 55 to 59 and women from 50 to 54 years – in 2018 there were more than 10 million people (Population of Russia..., 2017).

In the next 5 years (until 2023) in the context of the pension reform, the number of «third age» people will grow to more than 40 million people.

Over the next 10 years the quantitative growth of this community will be even greater, given the expansion of its boundaries to include men and women of the next age group. Thus, the number of «silver» community is projected to exceed a third of the country's population.

2. According to the statistical data analyzed by us, in Russia the share of persons with higher education in the pre-retirement and pension age groups – from 45 years and older – is steadily decreasing – from 28.2 % (45-49 years) to 13.7 % (70 years and more). Moreover, a sharp break occurs at the junction of the last two groups – 65-69 (20.5 %) and 70 years or more. The same situation is observed in secondary vocational education, where the differences between the age groups from 45 to 69 years are not very significant (ranging from 50 % to 44.8 %). But very large differences are recorded between the group of 65-69 years (44.8 %) and the group of 70 years and more (27.8 %). The reverse trend is observed in the situation of complete general secondary education, where the proportion of persons aged 45 to 69 is steadily increasing (from 16.1 % to 19.5 %) (Russian Statistical Yearbook..., 2017: 179). This trend is easily explained: the higher the level of vocational education of certain groups of the population, the lower the level of their general education as its main type.

From these data it is possible to make at least two conclusions concerning the education of the «third age» people. The first – that there is a significant gap between the two most common levels of vocational education «silver» community – higher and secondary vocational. In some age groups it is more than twofold. Thus, in the age group of 50-54 years – the proportion of those with higher education is 24.3 %, and secondary vocational – 51.3 %, in the groups of 55-59 years – respectively 21.5% and 51.1 %, 60-64 years – 20.1% and 48.5 %, 65-69 years – 20.5% and 44.8 %, 70 years and more – 13.7% and 27.8 % (Russian Statistical Yearbook..., 2017: 179).

The second conclusion is that the «silver» community has a significant potential and growth resource in relation to secondary vocational and higher education. Our interviews show that a large part of the representatives of the «third age» would like and even dreamed of getting higher education. But for various reasons at the time they failed to do so. Many of them are beginning to understand that the shift in retirement for 5 years and the increase in life expectancy opens the way for them to study and acquire higher (and for some – secondary vocational) education.

3. However, there are other results of recent studies. They show a very contradictory attitude of the «third age» people to increase their own educational level. On the one hand, the research of SuperJob conducted at the end of 2018 showed that quite a large number of Russians of pre-retirement age do not seek to study, improve their skills, get a new

profession. Every tenth Russian pre-retirement age does not want to undergo retraining. Only 36 % of respondents have a such desire (Survey: every tenth person of pre-retirement age..., 2018).

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

On the other hand, a certain part of the «silver» community has already formed attitudes and willingness to implement the strategy of active longevity, including through education. In this case, we observe a contradiction between the growing life, self-realization aspirations of people of pre-retirement and retirement age and the existing limited conditions in society for their active life. Hence, there is a public need to disclose the educational potential of the social community of the «third age» and the development of activities of state and non-state structures for its formation and use.

However, one of the key problems is the organizational structures of most Russian universities, institutions of secondary vocational and additional education are not adapted to the needs of «silver» students (Zborovsky G.E., Ambarova P.A., 2017: 48). Our analysis of various practices in secondary vocational and higher education organizations has shown that some of them have structures, units and groups of teachers focused on working with adult students. These are institutions of additional or continuing education. Cultural institutions also have non-formal education practices for the «silver» community, but they are clearly insufficient.

4. In the context of the beginning of pension reform requires regulatory and legal provision of education for the «third age» people. Today, the Federal Law of 2012 «On education in the Russian Federation» alone is not enough for the development of «silver» education, as it establishes only the framework conditions, removes age restrictions for education. There is a need for a well-developed law on adult education, which would stimulate the development of «silver» education as a special subsystem within the Russian education system.

### **Discussion**

The creation of «silver» education is an important indicator of the state of social and educational policy. Its development corresponds to the priority goals of the state in the interests of the older generation. While this type of

education in Russia affects only additional and non-formal education and almost did not get into higher education. Meanwhile, it is the universities that implement the «third mission» in their strategy, have regulatory, organizational, information resources and technologies that allow developing and constructively using the human capital of the older generation.

Special attention and new approaches are required to develop a financial and economic model of «silver» education. In modern socio-economic conditions the state will not be able to fully finance the «silver» education. Even in the economically prosperous 2000s, the developers of its various conceptions pointed to the need to observe the principle of parity and participation in this project of various social and economic actors. This principle remains relevant today. The state's contribution to the creation of «silver» education can be carried out in the form of partial targeted funding of various programs for the older generation, through the redistribution of pension and other social funds. It is also important to organize a system of attracting private funds, co-financing competitions of educational projects supported by various non-state structures and individuals.

An important key problem of education of the «third age» people, which requires discussion, is the problem of readiness to solve it on the part of various participants in this process. On the one hand, it is the readiness of the «silver» community to its new role and the need to integrate into society through continuing education. On the other hand, it is the readiness of the state, business and non-profit organizations to work on the problem of education for the «silver» community. Since the problem is common to all these actors, it will have to be solved together in any case. In our view, intersectoral cooperation can help overcome many regulatory, organizational and financial barriers to the development of «silver» education. This will make it possible to integrate the «silver» community into a wide range of areas of the state, market economy and non-market sectors of public life. Only questions arise: what are the grounds and forms of such interaction? who can act as an actor to promote ideas and specific projects?

One of the key and controversial problem is determination of the trajectories, ways and forms of development of the «silver» education. We believe that the «third age» will gradually, but inevitably, turn into a fairly long stage of life. It will have an independent meaning, will be associated with a specific and at the same time full-fledged way of life, filled with manifestations of labor, civil, social, educational, intellectual, cultural and leisure activity. It will be associated with the further enrichment of human capital. Therefore, in such conditions, of the «third age» people should be

able to choose the trajectories and forms of education offered by society. Whether it will be universities, colleges, structures of additional (natural-scientific, technical, humanitarian), non-formal and other education, whether they will be paid or free educational services, potential recipients should make a choice.

At last we will make a general conclusion about the need for a thorough study of the educational needs and value orientations of the «third age» people in different regions of the country and the elaboration of appropriate recommendations and social technologies aimed at creating a subsystem of education for the «silver» age within the Russian education system.

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