



Elżbieta Dubas* 

Introduction

Abstract

The text presents the contents of the current issue of “Nauki o Wychowaniu. Studia Interdyscyplinarne” and emphasizes the context of multi-/interdisciplinary gerontology studies conducted in Poland.

Keywords: “Nauki o Wychowaniu. Studia Interdyscyplinarne”, gerontology studies.

Wprowadzenie

Abstrakt

W tekście została zaprezentowana zawartość treściowa kolejnego numeru czasopisma „Nauki o Wychowaniu. Studia Interdyscyplinarne”, ze wskazaniem na kontekst multi/interdyscyplinarnych badań gerontologicznych prowadzonych w Polsce.

Słowa kluczowe: „Nauki o Wychowaniu. Studia Interdyscyplinarne”, badania gerontologiczne.

This issue of “Nauki o Wychowaniu. Studia Interdyscyplinarne” presents papers which describe a selection of recently conducted gerontology studies.

Gerontology studies the ageing processes in humans and old age as the last period of human life from various research viewpoints and in various historical and socio-cultural contexts. The discipline emerged in the 1920s and started to develop intensely in the second half of the 20th century. That intense development has lasted until today. In Poland, gerontology research in the social area has been clearly visible since the 1960s owing to, among other things, the works of Edward Rosset, a demographer, and Jerzy Piotrowski, a sociologist, as well as the reflexions

* University of Lodz, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Andragogy and Social Gerontology.

on education for the elderly of Aleksander Kamiński, a pedagogist. Since then, large nation-wide gerontology studies have been conducted three times in Poland and the results are presented in works edited by Jerzy Piotrowski (1973), Brunon Synak (2002), and Małgorzata Mosakowska, Andrzej Więcek, and Piotr Błędowski (2012). (It should be noted that none of those research projects included issues related to education.) Apart from those listed above, a lot of studies were conducted in many university gerontology centres in Poland. The great interest in gerontology research is an effect of the demographic changes experienced by modern civilisation, which include the quick process of ageing of well-developed communities in particular.

Gerontology is multi-/interdisciplinary. Its best-known sub-disciplines include medical gerontology (which includes a branch called geriatrics), experimental gerontology (in particular biology and physiology of ageing), and social gerontology (cf. Dubas 2008: 53). Gerontology encompasses all the social sciences. It also includes educational gerontology and geragogy (with pedagogical origins). What is most clearly visible in geragogy research is the reference to educational processes oriented towards old age, understood widely as education to old age, for old age, in old age, and through old age (Szarota 2015: 23–35). More and more frequently, reflection and studies on geragogy recognize old age in the context of values determining humanity and of the whole life, understanding old age as an important stage of human existence. The specialization in gerontology, the emerging of new gerontology sub-disciplines and research areas, is rapid. In the latest encyclopaedic study edited by Adam A. Zych the following examples of gerontologies are listed: biblical, pastoral, biological, educational, environmental, interventional, creative, care, penitentiary, resocialization, social, geragogy, Maria Montessori's geragogy, special geragogy, geriatrics, geriatric hygiene, geriatric dietetics, geriatric kinesiology, gerontological ethics *etc.* (Zych 2017: 524–542, 493–519).

Almost all papers published in this issue are theoretical-empirical and reflect, in a narrow temporal window, the diversity of gerontology studies conducted at present in Poland. Both methodological issues and the selection of research topics are diversified. Apart from the studies using quantitative methods, the authors conducted qualitative research using various methods and techniques. As well as pedagogic papers, sociological and psychological studies may be found, along with ones combining various disciplines, e.g. social sciences and health sciences. What is interesting is the palette of the presented research issues. It is a response of the researchers to the challenges of the times, a reaction to social problems present in modern ageing communities. It is also an expression of researchers' interest in individual human experiences to understand an individual better through learning about such experiences and to support the individual in forming their life and old age successfully. The presented papers include studies referring to the relationship between an elderly person and the younger generation – great-grandchildren (Litawa) and grandchildren when an elderly person plays the role of a parent in

lieu of biological parents (Borowik). We may also observe the relationship of a child with elderly people in the context of experiencing death through a book for children (Sztobryn-Bochomulska). Researchers are also interested in dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, which is a serious social and medical issue today (Smrokowska-Reichmann, Wąsiński, Dubas), or medicalization of old age through messages coming from the mass media (Gałuszka/Probierz). The authors also continue and update studies which have been conducted in gerontology many times, including studies on quality of life, here in connection with the idea of a friendly environment which creates favourable conditions for independent life in old age (Urbaniak), free time of elderly people and their social activity (Halicki), critical life events (Kuryś-Szyncel/Błachnio), or the sense of identity of elderly people (Jas).

This issue also includes three papers concerning fields other than gerontology, which were submitted to the journal. They are related to unemployment in connection to the category of social support and preferred values (Kirenko/Duda), reading autobiographic meanings of short films directed by Wojciech Has, from the viewpoint of a film expert (Grodź), and the reflection on education in the context of crises experienced by the modern man (Murawska). Those papers are also important for gerontology, as they touch upon the condition of an individual in the most general meaning. They show care for the meaningful life of an individual, as only a meaningful life may result in living old age successfully. As was written by Abraham J. Heschel: "We do not impose the care about the meaning, the essence of all creative efforts on ourselves, it is a necessity of our existence" (Heschel 2014:97). It is also a necessity which researchers face and which was described with expertise and sensitivity by the authors of these papers. I would like to thank the authors and express my appreciation for the work of the reviewers, whose competent, thorough, and kind comments contributed to the high quality of the presented works.

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