

Chapter 28

The Place of Elderly Education Within Adult Education and Model Suggestions Regarding Elderly Education

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ABSTRACT

Elderly education helps to prevent cognitive regression in the areas of memory, attention, audiovisual perception, language-usage ability, and behavior-management skills. Education provides elderly people with self-confidence and independence; it helps them more effectively cope with changing environmental conditions, increases their potential to contribute to society, and gives them opportunities to share their experiences with their and with individuals of younger generations. This study used a review of the literature to examine the place of elderly education within adult education by focusing on how resources are developed, as well as focusing on the development of a proper scope of these resources. Accordingly, this study aimed to determine the following: the extent to which elderly education is affected by social change, those factors to be considered while planning elderly education, and the areas and subjects in which elderly people need education.

INTRODUCTION

Elderliness is one of the most important stages of human existence (Özkul & Kalaycı, 2015). There is no clear distinction between the terms of aging and elderliness, which often results in them being used interchangeably or confused with one another (Duyar, 2008, p. 9). The term “elderliness” is used to refer to the progress every living creature makes over time; it is described as a perpetual, universal,

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and biological process causing a reduction in all natural functions. It is therefore critically important to evaluate the elderliness term in consideration of its physical, psychological, and social dimensions. In the physical sense, elderliness refers to those changes that are observed with chronologic age; comparatively, in the psychological sense, elderliness refers to those changes that are observed with chronologic age regarding an individuals' potential to accommodate themselves within society in terms of perception, learning, psychomotor skills, problem-solving, and personal attributes. From a sociological perspective, elderliness is related to behaviors expected from, and values attributed to, a specific age group. The *World Health Organization (WHO)* defines elderliness as the decline in individuals' skills when complying with environmental factors. Elderliness, which is observed without exception in every living creature, is mostly related to biological and physiological changes of living creatures other than humans. Nonetheless, social and cultural meanings are also ascribed to the elderliness of humans (Birren, 1982; Bulduk, 2014; Duyar, 2008, p. 9–19).

Benefits to human life brought about by technological advancements, advancements in medicine, and increased awareness regarding the protection and maintenance of health have all extended the expected lifetime of humans, thereby increasing the elderly population ratio in society (WHO, 1989). The WHO reported the number of individuals aged 65 years or over in developing countries as being 524 million in 2010, and project that this number will increase to 1.5 billion by 2050, with the greatest increase being seen in developing countries (WHO Global Health and Aging, 2011). It is noteworthy that aging in Turkey is faster than in other countries in Europe (National Research Council, 2011). In fact, the last decade of data of *Address-Based Population Registration System* conducted by the *Turkish Statistics Institute (TURKSTAT)* showed that the individuals aged 65 years or over comprised 6.8% of the overall population, and that this number increased to 8.8% in 2018 (TURKSTAT, 2019).

Scientists investigate various periods of human life and identify the period of childhood and adolescence as comprising the “first age”; the period of pursuing a career or engaging in working life as the “second age”; the period of retirement and abandoning working life as the “third age”; and the period of being in need of care provided by others as the “fourth age” (Glendenning, 2001). According to Radcliffe, if those problems that might arise in the third age period are successfully overcome, then the period of the fourth age can be minimized and active aging can be realized (Radcliffe, 1984, p. 62). In addition to maintaining good health, active aging is also defined as the aging period of individuals who are able to fulfill the requirements of sufficient nutrition, physical and mental activeness, living in a secure setting, and being a part of working life and a social environment; the WHO advocates that active aging should become a universal right for everyone (Ünalın, 2012).

On the other hand, it is impossible to put an age limit on the start of elderliness because perspectives regarding elderliness can change according to the society concerned, as well as the period and the economic conditions of individuals within that society. Personal differences, such as gender, culture, or psychological age, can also affect perspectives on elderliness (Kılıççı, 1988; Ünalın, 2012). Societies with an elderly population that comprises 7–10% of their total population can be considered to be “elderly societies” (Güleç & Tekbaş, 1997; Hablemitoğlu & Özmete, 2010, p. 21). Today, it is convenient to consider Turkey as an elderly society. Nonetheless, research and planning regarding elderly populations are limited, despite increasing elderly populations. With an increasing elderly population, people spend many years in the elderly period; therefore, the needs and requests of the elderly population gain ever-increasing importance (Sivış & Demir, 2004). It must be remembered that education for elderly people should underlie each policy that concerns or pertains to aging and elderly people, and education for elderly people should be addressed in regard to those issues that are related to aging (Emiroğlu, 1995).

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