Third age university (TAU) experience in cultural and physical activities for seniors



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Introduction

The society is becoming multicultural. Within this cultural-social medium arises the necessary condition and mutual understanding of complexity, which requires essential changes in education.

Changes in the concept of health, as well as changes in the educational paradigm and professional practice, inspired by the knowledge society, require the accord of various approaches – the biomedical, the social, and the humanitarian ones, as well as the modern educational and social premises, i.e. the accord of the learning and the empowerment paradigms.

Introduction

The new paradigms require competences allowing for working in an interdisciplinary (intercultural) team. The following problem may be formulated: *is it possible and how is it possible to create a learning environment in which representatives of different cultures would be able to learn to communicate and to collaborate?*

The "unity environment" (Tomlinson 2000), that forms under the influence of globalization, requires the social dimension of all activities: it brings relevance to the significance of the specific experience in the construction of the "unity environment" for interdisciplinary working TAU.

Interdisciplinary collaboration in practice

The development of mentioned competences requires a purposeful creation of the environment for the learning of intercommunication.

The analysis of the intercultural collaboration between different actors in the aspect of communication and collaboration highlighted problems arising from differences in approaches to the health, social or cultural phenomenon, to the practice/team working.

Theoretical framework for presentation was based on the Coleman's theory of social capital and concept of "unity environment" (Tomlinson).

Why interdisciplinary collaboration in TAU?

Planning and organizing supportive educational process are possible:

- By using holistic approach to the learning process.
- By dealing with relations between all members of association (students, theachers, administrators, different professionals) and environment.
- By integrating different types of resources (human, social, financial, structural, emotional, etc.) purposely.

Third age universities in Lithuania

EXPERIENCE IN CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The conference: "Mission of the third age university in the society of XXI c.: insights and interpretations" (2017) was organized by Kaunas TAU in cooperation with the Council of the National Association of Third Age Universities (TAU) and Vytautas Magnus University (VMU).

The sponsors of the conference - Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labor, Vytautas Magnus University, Municipality of Kaunas City.

During the conference, the purpose of the Lithuanian TAU was discussed, taking into account:

- the human situation in the changing society,
- the changes in the concept of literacy,
- intergenerational tensions,

and actualizing the implementation of the principles of nonformal and continuing education for the development of educational services for seniors.

The first plenary session focused on the **vision of the TAU.** We discussed the links between policy and mission, the importance of values in strategic policy decisions that have a profound impact on TAU (as NGO), based on solidarity, volunteering and collaboration.

We discussed changes in the concept of literacy and the challenges faced by the aging population: a) human right *vs* poverty, migration, inequality, unstable environment, pollution, violence; b) lack of literacy (in the broadest sense of the word) *vs* the development of intergenerational dialogue in the community with a view to the value of lifelong learning.

Does TAU create and how does it create opportunities for learning how to understand, communicate and collaborate in the time of transformations?

We listened to a presentation prof. Vida Mildažienė, "Use it or lose it", which clearly demonstrated the importance of maintaining an aging person's activity.

For reflections: Do lectures / activities organized by TAU respond to this need?

The second plenary session raised the following question: *What kind of TAU are we creating?*

We discussed the possibilities of intergenerational interaction resulting from transformations and profound differences between generations (assoc.prof. Vilija Stanišauskienė). We discussed how people's lives are influenced by changing circumstances; what knowledge and competencies of different generations should be purposefully developed in order to achieve intergenerational communication (A.Bajorienė, prof. N. Večkienė).

The risks of technological exclusion and the challenges of the new 21st century relevance of competences in the context of human rights and non-formal education opportunities was highlighted by presentation by dr. Paulius Astromskis, Attorney at Law, Lecturer of VMU Law Faculty, "Problems of Technological Exclusion in the Context of Non-formal Education Opportunities".

The presenter highlighted the dangerous invasion of information technology in our private lives and the need to tackle illiteracy in this area.

The report by Biruta Švagždienė, LSU professor on "Volunteering as a Citizenship Force: Personal and Practical Experience" encouraged discussion on: How TAU's activities would change if its organizers succeeded in supporting volunteering and community development?

Important experience in cooperation was revealed by the presentation of Gražina Jedemskienė, Kėdainiai TAU Rector on the effectiveness of partnership between NGO and district municipality in organizing activities of TAU.

Presentations have clearly demonstrated that communication within the local community (i.e., social capital) is a key resource for ensuring the balanced functioning of NGOs, governmental organizations and the municipality.

The participants of the conference emphasized that TAU students, who have reached the honorable old age and who have unique life experience, need comprehensive services supporting personal and social activity.

However, this requires cooperation between the GO and NGOs, requires agreement on a conceptual level to non-formal continuing education / self-education and learning.

It would allow to develop TAU model relevant to Lithuania: a) meeting the needs of learners' self-education, development of creative powers and abilities, development of general and professional competences, expression of citizenship; b) the provisions of the Law on Non - formal Adult Education and Continuing Education; and the principles of contextuality, equal opportunities, continuity, efficiency.

National Conference "Dignity of an Aging Person - Myth or Reality? Physical, psychological and social aspects of aging" (2019), was organized in collaboration with four higher education institutions - VMU, Kaunas TAU, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Kaunas College.

During the planning of the conference, the theme of preserving and expressing human dignity in practice was chosen in order to better understand the situation of an aging person in the aging society.

We took an interdisciplinary approach to planning the conference. Conference presentations were prepared by medical, pharmaceutical, rehabilitation, psychology, social work, education specialists and researchers.

The diversity of presentations has provided a platform for interdisciplinary discussions, making it possible to understand the complexity of the phenomenon of aging.

The relevance of such debates is evident in the context of an aging society, increasing social tensions and deepening social exclusion.

In order to develop the above discussions, a conference publication (electronic version) has been produced and is currently being edited.

The publication may also be useful because recently there is a tendency to emphasize the importance of history in the aging. In this perspective, Lithuania's aging process is specific and has features uncharacteristic of any other socio-cultural entity.

The involvement of TAU in the debate can make a significant contribution to understanding the phenomenon of aging and its consequences in Lithuania.

September 27th, 2019 an international conference "Study Practices at TAU and Perspectives for their Development" took place in Šiauliai to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Šiauliai TAU.

Organizers took an international approach to planning the conference: presentations were based on Lithuanian and Poland experiences, and experience from participation in Grundtvig project.

Specialist from health, social, humanitarian areas did presentation. The diversity of presentations has provided a platform for interdisciplinary discussions, making it possible to understand the complexity of the phenomenon of TAU.

The conferences discussed above are the result of TAU activities in Lithuania in recent years based on volunteering and cooperation. Let me give you some examples of this.

February 20th, 2015. The National Association of Third Age Universities Agreement was signed between TAUs acting as independent legal entities (NGO) and TAU working with various national educational organizations (GO).

On December 6th, 2017, The National Association of Third Age Universities has been awarded a special award from the Ministry of Health for "for activism, non affected by age".

October 18th, 2019. The Council of the National TAU Association invited the members of the Association to the General Reporting Meeting at VMU in Kaunas. The meeting was attended by TAU leaders and representatives from 31 TAU (46 TAUs belong to the

association).

During the meeting, the 47th member of the Kėdainiai TAU, who until now was a member of the Kaunas County TAU as a Kėdainiai faculty, signed a membership agreement.

December, 2016. The conference "Kaunas in the Context of Changing Values". Organizers: MČTAU, Kaunas TAU, Lithuanian University Women's Association (LUMA). Speakers: S. Šliažas, Deputy Director of Administration of the Municipality, founder of Kaunas TAU V.V.Margevičienė, head of VMU Letonics Center prof. A..Butkus, Director of President Valdas Adamkus Library-Museum dr. A. Antanaitis, MČTAU rector dr. Z. Žebrauskienė, President of LUMA Dalia Poškienė. Advent program: folk ensemble "Brydė" (conductor Teofilė Vozbutienė).

The presentations during the conference revealed the richness and diversity of TAU activities, the significance of cooperation between TAU and other NGO, and allowed to anticipate relevant topics for further discussions.

November, 2017. Panel discussion "TAU activities for the future of Lithuania". The event dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Lithuanian State and the Adult Learning Week took place on at VMU.

The event was organized by Kaunas TAU and VMU. Participants of discussion were dr. Janina Andriušienė, Honorary Director of Kaunas TAU, Assoc. prof. Beata Grebliauskienė, VU, assoc. prof. Giedra Linkaitytė, VMU, prof. Algis Krupavičius, VMU, assoc. prof. Elene Trepulė, VMU, prel. prof. Vytautas Steponas Vaičiūnas, VMU. Prof. Nijolė Večkienė, VMU.

Discussion was started by prel. prof. Vytautas Steponas Vaičiūnas, who encouraged to think about the challenges of the 21st century for man and his values, the significance of learning, while remaining active and spiritual people.

We continued to discuss the circumstances surrounding the establishment of TAU in Lithuania, volunteering, and the significance of TAU not only for the senior generation but also for the entire Lithuanian culture.

Together with TAU students, we discussed whether we are ready to learn, confronted with the challenges of a constantly changing environment and does continuous learning help to stay active people?

The discussion was significantly supplemented by dr. Elena Trepulė, presenting the European Adult Education Portal EPALE and its opportunities.

Prof. dr. Algis Krupavičius summarized the results of the discussion, asking: *How does politics promote the initiative of older people?*

December, 2017. At Historical Presidential Office of the Republic of Lithuania, Kaunas, Conference "They created an independent Lithuania" took place.

The aim of the conference was to discuss the contribution of prominent Lithuanian people - women and men - to the cultural, social and political life of Lithuania, revealing the significance of free personality in the period of change at the junction of the 20nd and the 21th centuries.

The conference was organized by Kaunas TAU, National TAU Association, VMU. Patrons of the conference: Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labor, Kaunas City Municipality.

The presentation "Implementation of Political and Civil Rights of Women in Lithuania" was delivered by Prof. Virginija Jurėnienė, VU, historian, expert, 2014 she was awarded the Gabriele Petkevičaitė-Bitė Memorial Medal.

The representative of Kaunas History Museum, assoc. prof. Arūnas Vaicekauskas in his presentation "Culture, State, Citizen: 20th century vs 21st century" discussed the cultural transformations that the Lithuanian and its citizens have gone through. He emphasized the prevalence of the phenomenon of imitation in the 21st century.

The conference participants had the opportunity to reflect on the peculiarities of contemporary political, social and cultural life that require critical thinking and reflection.

The presentation "The Centenary of Free Personality in Lithuania", prepared by historian, VMU lecturer Domas Boguševičius, continued the discussion. Free personalities, able to remain tolerant in times of tension and crisis, received special attention from listeners.

Dr. Dalija Snieškienė's report "Social Work as Cultural, Social and Political Innovation in Lithuania" allowed to further deepen the responsibility of the individual, in the process of creating the state. She highlighted the unique role of NGO in developing cooperation, state-building in the 20th century and initiating new activities.

The 2nd Session started with the artistic program "Living in Lithuania" dedicated to Gabriele Petkevičaitė-Bitė's companions (folk ensemble Jorija of the Kėdainiai).

The discussion was continued by Dalia Poškienė, President of the Lithuanian University Women's Association, the presentation "Outstanding Lithuanian Personalities and Their Contribution to State-Building". Report was significantly supplemented by the author of the book "Lithuanian Intelligents: 20th century 1st part.

Member of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania dr. Stasys Šedbaras presented "The Origins of the 1992 Constitution", in which a politician shared his experience of producing a key document for the Independent Republic of Lithuania and encouraged discussions between speakers and guests.

March, 2019. A discussion at the historic Lithuanian Presidential House, Kaunas: "Presidential Institution in Civil Society: What President Will We Select?". Organizer: Kaunas TAU. The discussion was moderated by prof. habil. dr. Eduardas Monkevičius.

The discussion was attended by: dr. Ingrida Jakubavičienė "LR President Antanas Smetona";

dr. Arūnas Antanaitis "LR President Valdas Adamkus"; prof. Algis Krupavičius "The President yesterday and tomorrow";

Birutė Štuikienė "A survey of TAU Law Faculty listeners".

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EXPERIENCE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Case 1: 2018-2020

In 2018 the Ministry of Social Security and Labor carried out a project to support the activities of non-governmental organizations representing the elderly "*Rich life of seniors in* 60+". Members of the TAU from all regions of the country took part in the project, with activities in four directions:

 Events for physical activities: III National TAU Universiade in Mazeikiai (18 teams, 400 participants); Commemoration of World Health Day in Vingis Park, Vilnius (400 participants); Aukštaitija TAU shared its best practices at the conference "The Effect of Physical Activity on Changes in the Body as a Person Ages".

Case 1: 2018-2020

2. The joint Visaginas and Druskininkai TAU event to promote senior volunteering.

3. Joint cultural events: traditional third festival of TAU choirs and vocal ensembles "If the Song is in the Heart - We Are Young" (15 TAU teams, 300 participants).

4. TAU Partnership and Cooperation: September, meetingseminar of the National TAU Association Council in Moletai; November, the annual meeting of TAU leaders or their representatives in Radviliskis. During the meeting activities of the Association and its perspectives and preparation for the IV TAU Universiade in Radviliskis were discussed.

Case 2: 2018-2020

2019, in honor of Medardas Čobotas 25th Anniversary of TAU the second Republican TAU Dance Group Festival "Senior Dance Twist 2019" was held in Vilnius, at the Palace of Culture, Entertainment and Sports.

Nearly 300 dancers from 16 TAU danced as many as 49 dance styles and multicolored compositions in a three-and-a-half-hour dance marathon.

Case 3: 2018-2020

National IV TAU Universiade 2020.

Radviliškis District Municipality Education and Sports Center and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania signed the implementation agreement of the project "National IV TAU Universiade 2020".

The purpose of the project is to promote sport and physical activity as an integral part of personality development, a source of health preservation among the elderly. The project is co-financed by the Sports Support Fund.

Case 3: 2018-2020

There will be 19 TAU teams (500 participants and about 500 spectators). Participants will compete in swimming, table tennis, basket penalties throwing, hel-pong, darts, checkers, chess, petanque.

There will be matches for team supporters and anyone who wants to play in them. At the end of the first day there will be cultural events that will invite everyone to a gathering.

At the event volunteer seniors-volunteers and a team of volunteers has been formed in the Open Space Youth Center from Radviliškis District.

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COLLABORATION: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

Case 1: Latvia, Denmark, Iceland, Lithuania

October 2019, project partner meeting. Experts discussion:
Presentations by Judith Akromiene, Head of the National
Education NGO Network, and Gediminas Kuliešius, Member of the Board of the Lithuanian Pensioners' Union Bočiai, on senior education and role of NGOs in the education system.
Presentations for discussion of the experience in the regions:
MČTAU experience;

TAU in Panevezys Region with emphasis on municipal policy and assistance to NGO (Panevezys TAU) and Panevezys District TAU, which operates at Panevezys District Education Center.

Case 1: Latvia, Denmark, Iceland, Lithuania

Latvian Adult Education Experience: Meeting in Riga with the Adult Education Association and representatives of different target groups and institutions - the Latvian Employment Service, Riga Stradins University and the Active Seniors Alliance "Rasa".

There was a discussion on quality standards in adult education and TAU activities, and a Latvian "Seniors University" based on the social business model.

An excursion to Aizkraukle Adult Education Center is organized, where Aizkraukle's Seniors' Club operates.

Case 2: Projects for membership 2019

In honor of the 15th anniversary of Lithuania's membership in the European Union, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Politics, Law and Economics Vitalius Skaržinskas initiated and received financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the project: "15 years in the European Union. What have we done? What's waiting? ".

The international closing conference of Erasmus + project "Seniors Volunteers for Migrant Integration" and a meeting of partners took place in Vilnius.

Case 3: Inovative projects 2019

November, in Trakai, the 20th Adult Learning Week "The world of learning is waiting. Let's go!", started with a trip to the bee world and together with the Trakai Beekeepers Society invited everyone to "Honey Breakfast".

Successfully launched thematic campaign "Seniors' Day on the Internet" returned on October. Throughout the week, Connected Lithuania hosted webinars that can be watched in Lithuanian public libraries and their affiliates.

The Seniors' Day Online 2019 campaign aims to encourage to feel confident in the digital world, to identify threats and fake knowledge, and to access relevant e-mail and services in a safe and responsible manner, constantly improving digital skills.

Case 4: A new educational paradigm for competitive conditions (2018-2021)

The aim of the project is to create a competitive legal, administrative and financial environment for nongovernmental educational organizations to participate actively in the formulation and implementation of education policy.

The project is implemented by members of the National Education NGO Network, which brings together 54 organizations (Network members and members) with expertise and experience in the intended educational policy areas, namely the House of Europe, MČTAU, the Civil Society Institute and will also include experts from other members of the Network.

Strengthening partnerships

Ongoing project "Strengthening partnerships between non-governmental education organizations and public authorities".

The long-term goal of the project is to create a competitive legal, administrative and financial environment for non-governmental education organizations to play an active role in education policy development, and to strengthen their professional and institutional capacities in education and training services.

Case 5: Coordination of Adult Education

On December 5-6, 2019, the European House organization organizes a conference to coordinate and fund the adult education system in Lithuania.

Participants will explore innovative examples of lifelong learning in communities, discuss with politicians and, with the help of researchers, explore ways to increase the supply of non-formal education / learning in cities and rural areas.

Case 5: Kaunas TAU

The University is providing non-formal education services, which include:

- taking into account the factors determining the human quality of life, the provisions of the European Agreement on Mental Health and Well-being;
- implementation of non-formal education programs based on the active voluntary participation of professionals from different fields (health, psychosocial services, education), researchers;
- liaising with GO, NGO and business organizations and developing intergenerational cooperation.

Case 5: Kaunas TAU

The University consists of 13 faculties dedicated to the empowering of seniors>

Faculties (english, art, literature, history, history of culture and education, dizain, theology, law, health care, creativity, tourism, theatre and music, special education)

are led by competent deans, and lectures are delivered and classes and events are conducted by academics, artists, psychologists, lawyers, lawyers, medics, specialists in foreign languages, history, culture and leisure, economists and politicians.

University is a member of the National TAU Association.

For discussions?

Political, management and educational questions should be solved in order to develop communication, collaboration and cooperation competence for team working in TAU. *There are needs for the institutions as learning organizations*.

The holistic concept of health, formulated by the WHO, includes some important aspects (the interaction between health, life expectancy, quality of life, and equal possibilities).

For this reason one can speak about the interdisciplinary nature and complexity of non-formal education in TAU.

For discussions?

According to Bourdieu, there exists a dialectic interaction between the *field* (objective structures) and *habitus* (mental, cognitive structures). A great significance for the *habitus* has the course of our socialization.

In Lithuania the non-formal education for elderly are characterized by specific features typical of this socio-cultural and socio-political formation.

These features substantiates the necessity for the development interdisciplinary and intercultural communicationin, based on special learning and reflection