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**ELDERLY IN RUSSIA: BETWEEN LIFE-LONG LEARNING,  
CARING, CONSUMER SOCIETY AND ICT**

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***Abstract***

The article highlights the results of our study which deals with the elderly, their information practices in Russia and trend of its utilization. The main goal of our qualitative research was to evaluate the need of elderly computer users to develop their educational and labour practices. The implementation of information technologies in most current workplaces has sharpened the “skills gap” problem of the older generation and the problem of social exclusion from the information society. “ICT-education” is the innovative part of the social services’ system, in the addition traditional medical services, housing and care. In modern society extending employment is even more a priority, than development of access to social services. But the analysis of computer literacy training programs for elderly people led us to the conclusion that they are not oriented for this goal and so on to the conclusion to e-government services. Such training is likely become a new prestigious sort of leisure for elderly, realised with support of libraries and social services, so it corresponds much to the logic of the “consumer society” A lack of efficiency criteria of training and the absence of ideas about the results that need to be reached in ICT learning have led to an even greater consumering of elderly people-clients of social services.

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**Keywords:** Aging, medicalization, ICT-training/education, consumer society.



## **1. Introduction**

Many socioeconomic problems are connecting with aging of population. Understanding of aging or old age is rapidly rethought in recent years, then appeared the ideas about not only elderly, but young elderly people as a big part of population (not 4-th, but 3-d age) (Bytheway, 1995). Improving the life conditions and the achievements of medicine led to a rapid increase in elderly population number and the extension of their aging factor. The majorities of today senior people are retired and draw a pension, so the society and the state must compensate their labor contribution. Eligibility of social services should be understood as criteria that must be satisfied in order for a person to have a right to a particular service, such as medical care, education, housing or social services. All countries strive towards the establishment of equal and equitable criteria in laws regulating the provision of social opportunities for all citizens and the prevention of discrimination. In practice, however, the true extent of eligibility can only be discovered when the actual level of accessibility to services or goods is measured in accordance.

Such configuration of the human rights and obligations was the first in the history of humanity. The situation was charged by the fact, that during late XX – early XXI century the number of elderly people have increased and the number of younger and employed persons have decreased. According to several experts, for modernizing society extending employment is even more a priority, than development of access to social services and social protection of the elderly as a whole. The elderly were initially assigned to the department of medicine, despite of the fact that biologists and physicians recognize now that their professional approach is totally inadequate to explain the aging, as there is no cascading loss of health and being old - does not mean to be a patient or ill. New idea - the liberalization of aging (Vincent, 2003).

## **2. Problem Statement**

The main aim - to see the nature of the interaction between the elderly and education ICT and evaluate the positive impact of ICT on the level of social inclusion and continuation of their employment.

## **3. Research Questions**

The question is elderly people resource or burden for modern Society and what is the role of ICT in this Process

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

A growing generation gap in is also evident. Why we can decide the problem of competition in employment between of generation and low level of the elderly computer literacy and motivation for continuing leaning.

## 5. Research Methods

Quality research was on a base 30 in-depth interviews with elderly people and 20 expert interviews with teachers ICT.

## 6. Findings

The modern institutionalized public health systems, both in Russia and abroad, are interested in the demand of the elderly for their services and thus often support medicalized views of human life. Aging has been viewed as a synonym of inevitable fading, and the technologies of medical and social care of the elderly have accumulated the impetus of addressing the elderly population as passive “objects of support.” Yet, this most important problem of the specifics of health of the elderly is still understudied. In 1948, the World Health Organization offered a definition of health as “a complete state of physical, mental, and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” Today, this definition is getting criticized for the implied idea of health as a static category and for that it is impossible to draw unified standards of wellbeing for different groups of population. As a result, social studies have actively used a dynamical view of health, portraying it as a process of adaptation of an individual/social group to the living environment. The prevalent idea in society regarding the unbreakable link between old age and illness adversely affects the status of an elderly individual, as old age linked with illness is perceived as an unwelcome state hindering the physiological and social functional capabilities of an individual that makes him dependent and leads to social exclusion. For that reason, society has dreamt of a cure against old age, and prominent experts I.G. Popovich and V.N. Anisimov have studied the opportunities of “healthy aging” (Popovich & Anisimov, 2013). Many classics of sociology have worked on this problem. This scope includes the “sick role” concept of T. Parsons, which was introduced to denote the niche of an individual escaping routine everyday stresses.

To overcome illness, you need an institute of health care, which includes the constant reproducing of the sick role and the physician’s role (Parsons, 1951). Attainment of the sick role may refer either to the need to take care of one’s health or to attempts to sustain this role with a view to the benefits and privileges it carries. However, as A. Smol’kin points out (building on the approach of Foucault), the classical sick role is not completely realized with the elderly, because such a patient is not actually relieved of responsibility to perform other roles and cannot expect a fully efficient medical intervention. It is rather about the patientization of old age” (Smol’kin, 2007). Indeed, when it comes to the elderly and their treatment, the trend toward medicalization of old age and the impossibility of biocontrol over it come together. We would stress the importance of stretching the employment period for the elderly, because this extension of socially oriented activities is one of the priorities of the active longevity concept. However, this is where the media effect is revealed. Active longevity is linked primarily with active focus on your own health and with the egocentric “obsession” of the elderly over their health, in which the majority of them report low satisfaction with their health conditions. As our research showed, the topics of mutual help and active involvement in social life are not yet discussed (Grigoryeva & Biculov, 2015).

*Aging, Globalization and computerization* - the main world processes now. Our main aim - to see the nature of the interaction between the elderly and education ICT and the positive impact of ICT on the level of social inclusion and continuation of their employment. We mean the problem of pensioners in the context of social status and professionally qualifying changes, rather than aging changes. Elderly people have been in every society but the age hasn't been a reason to release them from social obligations. The problem is competition in employment between of generation and low level of the elderly computer literacy and motivation for continuing leaning. A growing generation gap in is also evident. Let us emphasize once again that the fast computerization in all spheres of life leads to the shortening of technological replacement time as well as the demands to effectiveness time as well as the demands to the effectiveness of performance are growing. The M. Mead's idea of prefigurative culture embodies in life, the young generation technologically leaves the seniors behind. First of all the social status of parents depreciated than the social status of all senior people, is devaluated, speaking the language of cultural symbolism. The first sociologic works on the generation gap appeared in the early 1960s during the war in Vietnam. The subject of the conflict was the war or the consumerism of the older generation in America or the chance of obtaining a university education and employment for young people from lower society in Europe, first of all we mean France. The implementation of information technologies in most current workplaces has sharpened the "skills gap" problem of the older generation and the problem of social exclusion from the information society. Work with elderly people "promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being" (International Federation of Social Workers & International Association of Schools of Social Work, 2004). Therefore, there were social services that were the first to begin to fill the gaps in the education of the elderly and to develop

*ICT courses for this category of people.* The crucial role of policy transferability needs to be reflected when analyzing both internal system variables and external conditions for elderly education (Grigoryeva & Dmitrieva, 2014). Our quality research was on a base 30 in-depth interviews with elderly people and 20 expert interviews with teachers. It was to evaluate the need of elderly computer users to continue them elaboration. Motivation for visiting courses of computer literacy among older clients is quite varied. Among these needs of the most obvious are the following: a need for communication (communication through new communication tools and social networks) further training (usually this need formulated by employer, not be elderly themselves) a need to follow fashion trends (the desire to tell / boast possession of advanced skills) a need for implementation and confirmation of the government's "care" (is is important to use free services) need to overcome loneliness (can be realized in the process of training themselves - with the help of acquaintances with other students, because after the development of existing skills in the online space). The next question is how one can transfer these fruitful practices of innovation to a different cultural context without losing their efficiency. Furthermore, how to build interaction between major actors of social policy – i. e. the government, the business and the society, – in order to promote the social changes that would include the people of the "third age" back to the society. Thereby the elderly should not be regarded as mere objects of social policy, but one of agents of innovation. Only a very small part of elderly used computer literacy courses to keep working, to be certified to work and, especially, to find a new job. The main part of elderly students has already retired

and doesn't think about returning to qualified employment. "The ending of labor race pushing to rethink their place in life, search for new opportunities, goals, hopes for a greater impact and relevance of family and friends" But for many of elderly it is equally important to maintain progress of adulthood social status which is a mix of respect from the others and the level of payments. After all, modern society is based on a thorough knowledge of the belief that work is a form of self-realization for all ages, but postmodern is based on changed values. The increase of the number of crimes on the Internet committed against ordinary users is partly due to their unwillingness and inability to use the simplest precautions. Thus, about one half of Smartphone owners in the world do not set a password for the device, do not install antivirus software, and do not create backup files. As for Russia, this figure is 60 per cent. About 57 per cent of respondents in Russia and in the world have claimed they do not know of the existence of protective programs (Grigoryeva, Shubinsky & Mayorova, 2014). There is no need to specially stress the importance of these areas, but it should be noted that there are no special programs that protect elderly people from cyberthreats, while the elderly are also at risk. The government is interested in teaching children, creating tutorials, and developing the range of measures and special programs for them. However, for the time being, the second group of potential cybercrime victims are almost ignored. E-government services and electronic services are becoming increasingly popular among people of all ages. Unfortunately, the elderly people are not offered instruction in the basics of Internet security, despite the fact that they are the core audience of such a training course. A lack of efficiency criteria and the absence of ideas about the results that need to be reached in ICT learning have led to an even greater consumerizing of elderly clients. ICT as a consumer practice on time of liberalisation. The main legislative regulation of eligibility to social services in Russia over the last twenty years was the Federal Law on Social Services (1995), which was subsequently removed from Russian law in 2015. Citizens have equal rights in access but the key feature in the liberal orientation of services is to focus services on people who are in the most vulnerable situation. The relationship between federal and regional government is complex, and regions vary in the level of resources they are able to commit to social services. As the standard of living gets higher, the elderly play an increasingly significant economic role and affect macroeconomic indices, due to their demand for specific products and services. Elderly often do not want to enhance their qualification during employment period, but the number of those wishing to learn the use of ICT is not reduced. The ICT courses are preferable than specialised "clubs" for the elderly or visits to clinics for medical services. We concluded that computer use becomes a rapidly expanding consumer practice, confirming "modernity" of an old man. Learning such skills become fashionable even among older and probably corresponds to the promises of the humanistic concept of lifelong learning, based on the interest of the student, not the functional use. Perhaps the role of the elderly in the economy will be linked not only to the continuation of employment, but with the development of their consumer practices and new, not medical, service infrastructure.

## **7. Conclusion**

The knowledge of ICT can help the senior citizens to achieve all these goals through the support of their independence, but elderly need in special educational program of Internet security As we marked above modern care for elderly includes a different kinds of care: public, market, family and neighbor's

care – as well as a network of care coordinated by ICT for prevention of social exclusion of the elderly. There is a need to spur the demand for all kinds of electronic devices and services for the elderly. It has become obvious that the development of analytical tools for measuring the impact and payback from ICTs designed for the elderly is essential. No less important are practical tools for monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of implemented government initiatives aimed at the development of ICT industry for the elderly people. Since 2005, Russia's welfare regime has undergone a major shift. This has included reforms of social service provision to regions and municipalities, introducing market mechanisms in health care and education, encouraging flexibility and labour markets models, eliminating subsidies and entitlements (Cook, 2011). At the same time, a new theoretical approach has begun to develop. Instead of "the social state", the concept of "the service state" is used today. Taking into account the size of the territory, this new concept demands the development of "electronic public services," distance education, medical consulting by net and so on. Ex-president Dmitry Medvedev promoted access to online public services, but the change of the top state officials has led to a change of priorities in service. At the current moment only around 4–5% of the population actively uses these electronic public services (Malykhin, 2013).

Summing up the world best practices, we can say that ICT fitted to the needs of the senior citizens is an essential prerequisite towards shaping a more cohesive society and social inclusion of elderly.

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