

PEHPP 2019**Pedagogical Education: History, Present Time, Perspectives****INTERGENERATIONAL VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY:
ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS AND PEDAGOGICAL
CAPACITY**

A. G. Kukushkina (a)*, M. I. Pevzner (b), V. A. Petrova (c)

*Corresponding author

(a) Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University, Veliky Novgorod, Russia, anna_kukushkina@yahoo.com(b) Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University, Veliky Novgorod, Russia, maryna.belyaeva@gmail.com(c) Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University, Veliky Novgorod, Russia, Veronika.Petrova@novsu.ru***Abstract***

The article considers the phenomenon of intergenerational community from the perspective of pedagogy. The authors present an analysis of the essential characteristics of intergenerational communities (group identity, socially significant activity, interpersonal relationships mediated by the sociocultural context and social roles of participants, readiness for intergenerational interaction and value openness, opportunities for mutual development), the existing typologies, areas of activity of different age groups, as well as features of relationships and intragroup communication. The main emphasis is on identifying features (the informal and voluntary nature of interaction, high emotional involvement, informal education updating, equal rights of participants, organizational difficulties in planning and working, etc.) and revealing the pedagogical potential of intergenerational volunteer groups. The authors reveal the essence of the educational and socializing influence of intergenerational volunteering (as voluntary socially significant activity and informal communication) on representatives of various age groups and on the community as a whole. The article describes the experience of empirical research, which was conducted with volunteers of the Novgorod Maly Theater, as well as the environmental volunteer group “Dobry Novgorod”. There are offered the following recommendations for optimizing the activities of intergenerational volunteer associations: the organization of pedagogical support, targeted preparation of participants for intergenerational interaction, development of self-generation of the intergenerational community, creation of conditions for leisure outside the scope of volunteer activities, organizational support from local administration, etc.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Community, territorial community, intergenerational relations, intergenerational practices, volunteer activities, pedagogical capacity of the community.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

In personality socialization and formation an important role is played by interaction with representatives of various age groups. Communication with those who are older or younger allows us to see ourselves in the system of public relations, to realize our social and role functions. Nevertheless, in modern society, the issue of intergenerational relations is becoming more relevant in connection with the distance between generations on the one hand, and the desire to create a society for all ages on the other hand.

More and more communities, where a person lives, studies and works, become of different ages and multicultural, requiring participants to be prepared to interact with people of different generations. In this situation, it becomes relevant to determine the development of intergenerational relations in various territorial communities. The authors studied family and educational child-adult communities, however, organizations of supplementary education and social education begin to play an increasingly important role in the development of society and socialization of the individual. In our opinion, an intergenerational community focused on volunteering may have a special pedagogical capacity.

2. Problem Statement

The term “community”, generally accepted in Western European countries, is usually understood as a group of people living in the same territory and having similar cultural and social experience, historical heritage. Members of the local community are characterized by similar interests, the unity of customs and traditions, language, religious community, etc. An important role in understanding the phenomenon of the community is played by the concept of “identity” - awareness of belonging to the community. The variety of features that people have allows us to find effective solutions for various social problems and ensures the mutual development of all members of the community (Kukushkina, 2015).

In the scientific literature, there are also found such terms as “intergenerational community”, “multigenerational community”, “children-adult community” (Trashchenkova, 2016), “age-advantaged community” (Creating An Age-Advantaged Community..., 2015), “community for all ages” (Henkin, Holmes, Walter, Greenberg, & Schwarz, 2005), which is presented by the authors as a community that “promotes the well-being of children, youth, and older adults, strengthen families, and provide opportunities for ongoing, mutually beneficial interaction among age groups” (Henkin et al., p.4).

In studies devoted to the problems of groups of different ages, various typologies of such communities have been developed. A detailed classification of child-adult communities, which, in our opinion, can be applied to intergenerational communities, is presented in a monograph edited by Pevzner, Sheraisina, and Donina (2016). The authors distinguish different types of child-adult communities at different levels of territories:

- the macro level – real network and virtual network communities;
- the meso level – local intraorganizational and interorganizational communities;
- the micro level –contact communities of a related and unrelated type.

From the perspective of pedagogy, it also seems important to distinguish types of different ages communities, such as educational child-adult communities and intergenerational communities, multi-generational local communities (residents of the mdistrict), as well as informal and club communities (for example, the scout movement, volunteer groups), combining the features of the first two types: territorial affinity, educational capacity, non-formal education (Kukushkina, 2015).

The studies of Zeldin, Larson, Camino, and O'Connor (2005), Kaplan (2001), Kukushkina (2015) are devoted to the content of intergenerational communities. In this regard, studies of the phenomenon of intergenerational practices are also the subjects of interest. Specialists at the UK Center for Intergenerational Practices describe them as “the ones bringing people together in a focused, mutually beneficial and meaningful activity that fosters mutual respect and understanding between generations, and also aims to strengthen the community” (A Guide to Intergenerational Practice, 2011, p. 4).

By the nature of interaction and the content of activities, intergenerational practices can be practically divided into several groups: assistance from one generation to another (mentoring, volunteering, educational services, etc.); joint work of generations on one of the social problems in the course of creative, voluntary, research activities; joint training for different generations.

Joint voluntary work, being an intergenerational practice of the third type, contributes to the development of a generation’s dialogue, preservation of the continuity of the society historical life, moral and cultural heritage. This study presents an attempt to determine the characteristics and analysis of the pedagogical capacity of intergenerational communities engaged in volunteer activities.

3. Research Questions

3.1. What are the characteristics of local and territorial intergenerational communities?

3.2. How do intergenerational relationships affect the effectiveness of communication and activities in the intergenerational community?

3.3. What are the features of intergenerational volunteer communities?

3.4. What is the pedagogical capacity of a volunteer intergenerational community?

4. Purpose of the Study

This study involves the description of the essential characteristics of intergenerational volunteer communities, the determination of the influence of intergenerational relations in such communities on communication and volunteer activities, as well as the identification of the pedagogical capacity of intergenerational communities, including the ways of optimizing their future work.

5. Research Methods

5.1. In order to determine the essential characteristics and basic types of intergenerational communities, pedagogical literature was studied on the topic of territorial, child-adult, and intergenerational communities.

5.2. The survey with representatives of 12 communities of this type in Veliky Novgorod was conducted, in order to identify the features of relationships in intergenerational territorial communities (20

respondents under 18 years old, 15 respondents over 30 years old).

5.3. The method of included monitoring was used to determine the specifics of functioning and relations in intergenerational volunteer communities (during the work of the volunteer group "Dobry Novgorod" from 2017 to 2019), as well as a conversation with participants in the volunteer community of the Maly Theater (Veliky Novgorod).

5.4. The pedagogical capacity of the volunteer intergenerational community was identified through observation, as well as conversations with the volunteers of the "Dobry Novgorod" group and the volunteers of the Maly Theater (10 volunteers under 16 years old and 10 volunteers over 30 years old).

5.5. Analysis and synthesis were used to generalize the obtained empirical data.

6. Findings

6.1. Essential Characteristics of Intergenerational Communities

Having based on existing definitions, in this study we use the term intergenerational community, understanding it as a group of people of different ages, united by a common goal, interests and values, on the basis of which joint activities are carried out and the relations of group members are developed.

The researchers (Hernandez & Gonzalez, 2008; Kessler & Staudinger, 2007; Martin, Springate, & Atkinson, 2010) describe the many positive effects of intergenerational practices for young people (the space of development and self-realization, the experience of socially significant activities, increasing of self-esteem, the development of tolerance, responsibility, sensitivity, etc.), the elderly (social inclusion, a sense of self-worth, meeting the need for communication, transfer of knowledge and experience, improvement of well-being), as well as for society as a whole (strengthening of community cohesion, the formation of a common value-semantic field, reducing alienation and anxiety).

The representatives of "Generations United" write about the value component of intergenerational communities. According to the authors, "an intergenerational community is one where individuals of all ages are an integral and valued part of the setting". The manual notes the importance of partnerships in educational, cultural, economic and other fields, as an integral characteristic of an intergenerational community. "An intergenerational community ... enables all ages to share their talents and resources, and support each other in relationships that benefit both individuals and their community" (Creating An Age-Advantaged Community..., 2015). Thus, an important characteristic of the intergenerational community is the value of diversity, willingness to interact with representatives of other age groups.

The main substantive characteristic of the intergenerational community is joint activity, which can be carried out both on an ongoing basis (training, labor activity), and within the framework of various intergenerational projects and programs. The features and nature of the activity of intergenerational communities were studied through the empirical method.

The study involved the representatives of various intergenerational communities of the Novgorod region: Search expedition "Valley" in memory of N. I. Orlova, Non-profit organization "Red Cross" (Novgorod branch), Novgorod children's music school of Russian folklore "Kudesy", Folk ensemble "Krugovina", Children's naval center "Club of young sailors", Military-patriotic club "Winners", Youth Council of the Novgorod regional Trade Union Federations, Star Port Portal of Assistance and Support for Minors and Pensioners, Read-Gorod Library Center for Children and Youth, Youth House, Center for

Youth Initiatives SAM (BY YOURSELF).

During the study, interviews and conversations with the leaders and participants of these communities were conducted, as well as a content analysis of the Internet resources of the organizations under study was used (VKontakte social network pages, websites).

Based on the results of the study, the main activities of intergenerational communities were identified, which include:

- labor activity and employment;
- project work and research activities;
- educational activities (master classes, trainings, meetings, educational projects, etc.);
- leisure activities (game programs, creative evenings, concerts, discussions, etc.);
- creative activity (choreography, arts and crafts, theater, vocals, etc.);
- patriotic education and search activity (meetings, holidays, meetings with veterans, memory visits, research search expeditions, publishing work);
- volunteer activities (activities to support socially disadvantaged groups, leisure activities, environmental events, the search for missing persons, etc.).

Based on the Pain study (2005), mentoring, historical research, video and photography, discussion and solution of social problems, and community mapping can be added to this list. The phenomenon of “community education” (Community education / Community-based education / Community learning & development) is also becoming popular.

Based on a survey of participants and coordinators of intergenerational communities, the characteristics of the interaction and relations of intergenerational communities’ members were also determined:

- the prevalence of formal interaction in the framework of events;
- functioning of communities on the basis of municipal and state institutions;
- lack of expressed intergenerational relations on the basis of the city’s subdistricts;
- interaction in the framework of a significant, interesting socially useful activity;
- debunking age stereotypes in the course of communication on the basis of significant activity, the presence of interest in the life of another generation (for all age groups);
- the absence of obvious conflicts in the interaction;
- young people have difficulties in building relationships in a different age group associated with the lack of intergenerational contacts in everyday life;
- reduced difficulties in communication with representatives of other ages.

These features allow us to conclude about the positive impact of participation in such communities on representatives of age groups, while indicating opportunities for optimizing the activities of intergenerational communities.

According to the results of theoretical and empirical research, the main essential characteristics of

the intergenerational community include:

- identity, awareness of one's community, a sense of ownership;
- socially significant joint activity uniting representatives of various age groups;
- interpersonal relations, mediated by joint activities, sociocultural context and the range of social roles performed by community members;
- willingness to interact with representatives of different age groups;
- mutual development opportunities for representatives of various groups;
- value openness, orientation to diversity and cooperation.

6.2. The pedagogical capacity of the intergenerational volunteer community

Despite the wide range of activities that are characteristic of intergenerational communities, in our opinion, volunteer intergenerational groups have a special pedagogical potential.

In Akimova's study (2006), volunteering is defined as "the process of involving people of different social status and age in informal social activities ... based on the ideas of selfless service to the humane ideals of humanity and the public interest" (p. 95). Petrova (2007) notes, that in the course of volunteer work such personal characteristics are formed as "the tolerance of subjects to different social groups ...; willingness to help those in need; sense of responsibility; teamwork, respect, etc." (pp. 10-11).

According to the included observation, as well as conversations with existing volunteers, the following features can be distinguished, which partially distinguish the volunteer community from other intergenerational groups:

- voluntary and gratuitous nature of the association and activities (this may also lead to some inconsistency of the participation of volunteers in the community);
- informal nature of interaction and relationships in the community;
- unity of values and interests with a variety of motives for activity;
- equality of participants, which, nevertheless, can be mediated by age-related social swarms and experience in the organization
- high social significance of the activity;
- high emotional involvement (danger of emotional burnout);
- updating the mechanisms of informal education;
- difficulties in organizing work associated with differences in schedules and schedules of people of different ages;
- changes in motivation to participate in community activities at different stages of a volunteer's life.

In our country, volunteering is more commonly associated with the younger generation, however, the phenomenon of "silver volunteering" (including elderly people in volunteering) is currently actively developing. Each age group finds its motives for volunteering.

For young people and high school students, volunteering is a socially significant activity, providing

a field for self-determination and self-expression. Volunteering allows a young person to receive public recognition, provides numerous opportunities for informal education and primary professional experience. In addition, for schoolchildren and youth, the volunteer community is a reference group that can satisfy the needs for belonging and meaningful communication.

. Adults find in volunteering opportunities for the realization of their talents and hobbies, the need for self-realization and the implementation of ideas about personal contribution to the development of society.

Participation in the volunteering of older people is largely due to social motives. Volunteering allows them to fill their free time, build new social ties, realize the need for the transfer of life experience and recognition of merit. The development of voluntary initiatives among the older generation may be one of the solutions to the socio-psychological problems of the older generation, a kind of prevention of social exclusion of the elderly.

Intergenerational volunteering is more effective than organizing the work of a coeval group, in that it allows perceiving representatives of another generation as full participants in socially significant activities, assessing their abilities and personal qualities.

- As part of the study, a conversation was held with two age groups of volunteers, participants of intergenerational volunteer groups: 10 people under 16 years old and 10 people over 30 years old. During the conversation with the participants of the volunteer communities, the following issues were discussed:
- What gives you participation in volunteering? Why do you volunteer?
- How does it affect your volunteer work that you have to work in a team with people younger / older than you? How does this affect the activities of the volunteer association generally?
- Do you have any difficulties while communicating with volunteers who are older / younger than you?
- Has your attitude to people of a different age group changed in the process of joint volunteer activities?

As the results of the conversation showed, for both groups an important role is played by the possibility of informal and interesting leisure activities provided by volunteering. In both cases, respondents noted the value of the community as a space of interesting communication. An important role of interpersonal relations was noted by adult volunteers who value the "like-minded team". Adult respondents were also characterized by greater awareness of volunteer activities. Participants noted "the opportunity to put their values and ideas into practice," "do something important for the city," "set an example".

Answering questions on interaction with other age groups, representatives of the younger age group noted situations of embarrassment ("I'm embarrassed to express my opinion", "sometimes I just listen"), but also in the answers there was a description of democratic communication ("we all do the same thing business", "sometimes I can tell something to those who are older than me", "I don't feel the distance, such as at school"). An important role in reducing the age gap is played by the fact that all participants turn to each other by first name and. According to adult participants, insignificant misunderstanding situations may

arise, caused by the difference in the sociocultural context (memes, youth slang, ignorance of books, works of art that are familiar to elders, etc.).

The most interesting for our study were the answers to the question about changing attitudes of participants to representatives of other age groups. There were only positive answers in this question, related to the debunking of age stereotypes, increasing the value of another age group, respect for it (“it turned out to be interesting to work together”, “a different point of view allows you to see a wider picture”, “it became more comfortable to communicate with people of different age”, “I saw that adolescents are very responsible and conscious”, “youth turned out to be very thinking and subtly sensitive”, “older volunteers can motivate anyone with their energy!”).

Thus, intergenerational volunteering allows different age groups to see each other in the process of important, understandable and interesting activity, to share the sense of selfless help to the world and other people, the joy of the well-done work, which the participants chose themselves, without coercion. This makes them take a different look at themselves and their team.

Nevertheless, observations show that in the process of planning, discussing and organizing volunteer activities, conflicts and difficulties are possible due to the difference in social experience, preferences, and views of participants. In such situations, the volunteer coordinator needs to take the position of a mediator, paying attention to the value of diversity, the importance of taking into account different opinions.

Wider opportunities for socialization and upbringing are updated in the case when the interaction of participants in the volunteer community goes beyond the scope of the main activity. If, in addition to volunteer actions and projects, volunteers meet to spend time together (celebrating the New Year, birthdays, evenings of board games, creative evenings, etc.). In such situations, the mechanisms of informal education are launched, when senior volunteers pass on their own social experience or learn from the younger generation, an exchange of views takes place, and values are internalized. This informal communication can be initiated by both the coordinator of the volunteer association and any of the volunteers.

6.3. Recommendations on updating the pedagogical potential of intergenerational communities

Summarizing the theoretical research and empirical data, we can outline the following recommendations for updating the pedagogical potential of territorial intergenerational communities in general and volunteer intergenerational groups in particular:

1. The formation of professional and personal readiness of leaders of intergenerational communities to organize intergenerational interaction, the ability to take into account sociocultural, psychological, philosophical and other features of different age groups, to create a democratic environment for interaction.
2. Pedagogical support of intergenerational interaction entities, which involves ensuring the preparedness of community entities for intergenerational interaction (information, communication skills training, empathy development, etc.), organization of acquaintance and rallying of a different age group (team building exercises, events for developing corporate culture), conflict resolution and problem situations, assistance in organizing intergenerational communication and development of the initiative.

In addition, the pedagogical support of intergenerational interaction involves the harmonization of age-specific subcultures, the transition from a disparate set of values, attitudes, communication styles of representatives of different age-specific subcultures to integration and finding a value-semantic basis for

communication and activity. The organizer needs to identify common points of interaction, as well as show the participants the strengths and value of the contribution of representatives of another generation.

3. Development of a self-government system of an intergenerational community. Based on the provisions of a personality-oriented approach and the ideas of event-based pedagogy, it is necessary to provide participants with sufficient freedom in planning work and choosing activities. On the one hand, this will take into account the interests of specific community members, and on the other, it will contribute to informal communication and intensification of intergenerational interaction.

4. Cooperation with territorial governing bodies in the development of intergenerational communities (participation of governing bodies in the discussion and planning of community activities, consultations on problematic and controversial issues, information support for the activities of the intergenerational community).

5. Consideration of values, trends and development opportunities of the territory. A promising basis for communication and interaction between different age groups, in our opinion, may be the cultural and historical heritage and existing resources of the territory on which the community is based. So, planning the activities of the intergenerational community can be carried out taking into account the urgent problems of the region. Intergenerational community can take part in local and regional competitions, forums, meetings. Introduction to the heritage of ancestors, the traditions of national and regional culture, as well as participation in the development of the region allows young people to prove themselves and see the value of the experience of generations in the course of socially significant activities. In this situation, older people are endowed with new value characteristics, becoming carriers of traditions, while young people act as initiators of positive changes.

From the standpoint of local self-government, the following actions are possible for the development of intergenerational communities: intensification of intergenerational interaction at the community level of the city's microdistricts; organization of intergenerational training, mentoring and mentoring programs; the organization of urban and regional events aimed at the development of intergenerational relations; the inclusion of communities of different ages in solving socially significant problems of the region; the creation of platforms for informal interaction of people of different generations; information, advisory and other support for the activities of intergenerational communities; the organization of training of curators of intergenerational communities (seminars, trainings, etc.); popularization of the ideas of society for all ages, intergenerational interaction, value relation I for diversity through awareness, public service announcements, and others.

In modern society, the role of organizers of intergenerational practices can be taken by social welfare centers, schools and other organizations seeking to support the sustainable development of the local community and effectively solve the problems of social education and socialization of citizens.

7. Conclusion

This study made it possible to identify the existing characteristics of communities of different ages, their social and pedagogical potential for representatives of different generations and society as a whole.

Along with educational, creative, and other types of intergenerational communities, volunteer associations play an important role in the development of society. As the study showed, the

intergenerational interaction of participants united by a common voluntary socially significant activity is characterized by greater emotional and value involvement and has significant pedagogical potential.

The effectiveness of the intergenerational volunteer community increases with the organization of pedagogical support, focused work on preparing participants for intergenerational interaction, and organizational support from the local government.

References

- A Guide to Intergenerational Practice. (2011). *Center for intergenerational practice*. Retrieved from <http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/Libraries/Documents/Guide-to-Intergenerational-Practice.pdf>
- Akimova, E. V. (2006). Pedagogicheskoe volonterstvo v deyatelnosti detsko-molodezhnyh ob"edinenij: [Pedagogical volunteering as the activity of children and youth associations] (Doctoral dissertation). Ryazan'. [in Russ.]
- Creating An Age-Advantaged Community: A Toolkit for Building Intergenerational Communities that Recognize, Engage, and Support All Ages (2015). *Generations United*. Retrieved from <https://www.gu.org/app/uploads/2018/06/Intergenerational-Toolkit-Creating Age Advantaged Communities.pdf>
- Henkin, N. Z., Holmes, A., Walter, B., Greenberg, B. R., & Schwarz, J. (2005). *Communities for All Ages: Planning Across Generations*. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/resources/communities-for-all-ages-planning-across-generations/>
- Hernandez, C. R., & Gonzalez, M. Z. (2008). Effects of Intergenerational Interaction on Aging. *Educational Gerontology*, 34(4), 292-305.
- Kaplan, M. S. (2001). *School-Based Intergenerational Programs*. UNESCO Institute for Education.
- Kessler, E., & Staudinger, U. (2007). Intergenerational potential: effects of social interaction between older adults and adolescents. *Psychology and Aging*, 22(4), 690-704.
- Kukushkina, A. G. (2015). The development of intergenerational relations in the territorial community: foreign experience. *Vestnik NovSU: Pedagogical sciences*, 5(88), 64-67.
- Martin, K., Springate, I., & Atkinson, M. (2010). *Intergenerational Practice: Outcomes and Effectiveness*. Slough: NFER.
- Pain, R. (2005). Intergenerational relations and practice in the development of sustainable communities. *Background Paper for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Durham University*. Retrieved from <https://lemosandcrane.co.uk/resources/ICRRDS%20intergenerationalrelations.pdf>
- Petrova, T. A. (2007). Razvitie u molodezhi tolerantnosti k starosti [The development of youth tolerance to old age]. *Srednee professional'noe obrazovanie*, 10, 10–11 [in Russ.]
- Pevzner, M. N., Sheraisina, R. M., & Donina, I. A. (Eds.) (2016). *Territorial child-adult communities: models, concepts and development trends: monograph*. Veliky Novgorod: Yaroslav-the-Wise Novgorod State University.
- Trashchenkova, S. A. (2016). The concept of development of child-adult communities. *Vestnik of Yaroslav the Wise Novgorod State University*, 2(93), 108-111.
- Zeldin, S., Larson, R., Camino, L., & O'Connor, C. (2005). Intergenerational relationships and partnerships in community programs: Purpose, practice, and directions for research. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 33(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20042>