

AROUND

OF

SENIORS'

MEMORIES

THE BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH
ON THE EDUCATIONAL PATHS
OF EUROPEAN SENIORS



EDITED BY
ALEKSANDRA MARCINKIEWICZ

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

This book is the outcome of an international project - inter-Generational European Memories (GEM) - implemented within the framework of the Grundtvig Partnership Project, which is a part of the European Lifelong Learning Programme. Six educational organizations took part in the project, from: Austria, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and Turkey. The project focused on the collection of memories of European seniors. The research framework of the GEM project was realized by using the biographical method. All partners of the project were involved in the implementation of research. It was therefore possible to collect biographies from six European countries.

Referring to the idea of the project, the book is devoted to issues of aging, education of seniors and the meaning of memories for older people. The first chapter therefore focuses on the challenges of modern society, the importance of learning in the new reality and the place of seniors in a society.

The second chapter includes a collection of texts related to the biographical approach in science, the history of biographical research, and the educational potential of biography. There are also papers which focus on different methods of using biographies and memories in the education of seniors.

The papers in the last part of a book present the idea of the European Lifelong Learning Programme, the concept and goals of the inter-Generational European Memories project. The organizations which took part in the GEM project are also featured. There is also an article on the qualitative analysis of content as a method which was used to analyze data gathered by using the biographical method in the GEM project. The book concludes with a paper which presents the results of biographical research which were carried out under the project inter-Generational European Memories.

This book is an attempt at a scientific reflection on the use of the biographical method in the education of seniors, and is intended to encourage good practice in the field of andragogy. I also hope that this book will inspire other researchers to undertake further research on the importance of memories in adult education.

Aleksandra Marcinkiewicz

EDUCATION
OF OLDER PEOPLE
IN INFORMATION SOCIETY

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THE LIFELONG LEARNING AGAINST CHALLENGES OF CIVILIZATION

Contemporary reality is characterized by dynamic changes resulting from rapid technological and information progress. New technologies are a factor describing the present society, because they are present in all areas of human functioning (from the military sphere, through education, employment, banking, transportation, shopping and entertainment, etc.) (Castells, 2010a, p.1). The result is that a man in the new reality faces many challenges. On the one hand, the ubiquity of technology implies new skills and competencies which allow their use and on the other hand, dynamic transformation forces participating in the ongoing process of learning, which allows one to keep up with the changes. Therefore, education is a strategic element enabling adaptation to a constantly changing reality.

It is worth noting that education not only allows adaptation to changes but also, it is one of the pillars of the Information Society. In a society based on information, education becomes a strategic factor in social development and the realization of this goal is seen in the idea of lifelong learning.

Before, the term of Lifelong Learning is defined, we must explain changing the importance of education. The idea of Lifelong Learning has resources in adult education¹.

Reflections on the education should be started with initial education (the front-end model of education). Peter Jarvis indicates that „the idea that education was regarded as occurring only during the formative years and that when social maturity or adulthood, was achieved then education ceases” (2004, pp. 39-40). According to this idea educational process comprises only a part of life- childhood and youth. The education is completed when the man reaches maturity, so knowledge and abilities are not changed and are enough for life. Therefore, education did not concern adults. Moreover, education was considered as an institutional process, so in this case we can use the term of formal education defined first time by John Dewey. In similar manner, Philip Hall Coombs and Manzoor Ahmed sought to distinguish formal education from informal and non-formal education (Jarvis, 2004, pp.40-41).

Formal education means a hierarchical system of educational institutions (from primary school to higher education), which through certificates and diplomas, selects students for different social roles and puts them on different levels of the social structure. This kind of education is similar to initial education. Non-formal education involves educational activities, which lie outside the formal education system this includes courses, seminars, lectures, training, postgraduate studies, etc. However, informal

¹ Adult education has three different meanings: the process of adults learning; a set of organized activities carried out by a variety of institutions to achieve specific educational objectives; a field of social practice (Jarvis, 2004, p.45).

education refers to processes in which the man acquires the knowledge, values, skills, abilities, from universal experience. Nowadays, a change from the formal education to non-formal and informal can be observed in adult education (Marcinkiewicz, 2011, pp.8-9; Jarvis, 2004, pp.40-41). Assuming that education includes formal, informal and non-formal aspects we mean this process more broadly than before. Moreover, education concerns not only childhood but all stages of life.

P. Jarvis distinguished the term adult education from education of adults. Adult education was understood as developing existing knowledge, skills and hobbies by adults in leisure time. It is a liberal form of education, where it is believed that the adult's education has been completed and adult education is only follow-up of initial education. However, the term education of adults „refers to any educational process undertaken by adults, whether liberal, general or vocational, and located in the spheres of adult, further or higher education or outside the institutional framework entirely. This term also implies that education is not completed at any stage in the lifespan and, indeed, that the education of adults may begin in the period of initial education and, for some people, it continues into post-initial and post-compulsory sectors” (Jarvis, 2004, pp.44-46).

Other important concepts in adult education are continuing education and further education. The second concept should be understood as the achievement of the following levels of education. „Further education may be post-compulsory but not necessarily post-initial. (...) further education is prevocational, vocational or academic” (Jarvis, 2004, p. 47). It should be noted that further education belongs to formal education distinguished by P. H. Coombs. Continuing education is post-initial education and „need not be directed towards any course assessment or award” (Jarvis, 2004, p. 47). Therefore, a term the continuing education could be located in non-formal education.

In the literature often continuing education is identified with lifelong education or lifelong learning. As has already been pointed out continuing education based on the front-end model of education. Moreover, it is improving skills and knowledge which man has acquired in educational process during childhood and adolescence. Lifelong education and lifelong learning emphasize an approach that educational process includes all life and all aspects of human activity. P. Jarvis had defined „lifelong learning as every institutionalized learning opportunity, having a humanistic basis, directed towards the participant's development that may occur at any stage in the lifespan. This development might refer to knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and the senses – the whole person” (2004, p.62). In the case of lifelong learning, it is a combination of individual and institutionalized learning. „Learning can be understood as an individual process which continues throughout the whole of life – lifelong learning. But learning can also be considered as institutionalized and formalized: in other words the educational system. Consequently, lifelong learning embraces the socially institutionalized learning that occurs in the educational system, that which occurs beyond it, and that individual learning throughout the lifespan, which is publicly recognized and accredited” (Jarvis, 2004, pp. 64-65).

The factor differentiating the two concepts is that the lifelong education stressed formal education, in turn the lifelong learning extends mainly in the areas of non-formal and informal education but also formal education. It should be indicated that in both concepts learning takes place throughout the entire lifespan. Mieczysław Malewski (2010, p.47) drew attention to the fact that the idea of lifelong learning shifts its focus

from educational institutions (teaching) to learning individuals and local communities (learning). Furthermore, this idea emphasizes the importance of everyday, common knowledge, and not the scientific knowledge as before.

In summary, lifelong learning means that the education lasts a lifetime and it should serve human development. However, it should be noted that each individual educational path is a part of social life. Therefore, the idea of lifelong learning is a very important factor of the new society.

It should be noted that the new society (information society) is a result of social, technological, economic and cultural transformations (Castells, 2010b, p. XVII). Moreover, Michał Łuszczak and Agnieszka Pawłowska who analyzed many definitions of Information Society, explain that new society is composed of four pillars which are analogous to the processes of transformation formulated by M. Castells (2000, pp. 75-102):

- **Technological.** This pillar is formed by availability of ICT i. e. machines and software.
- **Economic.** Power of this pillar is directly proportional to the share of sectors that deal with the production and processing of new technologies and share information technology in the economy and their participation in the distribution of GDP.
- **Social.** The stability of this pillar is associated with the use of new technologies. Education of people is very important, which, which is inversely related to the digital exclusion indicator.
- **Cultural.** Information culture is bound up with degree of mastery of the use of software and technical devices. It is acceptance of information as properties and goods.

As can be noticed, the reason for transformation and the feature of new society is technology. The new technology defines modern society. Furthermore, referring to the previous claims we can notice that changes in education result from changes in the society. In the industrial society where the dominant routine work procedures are implemented, semantically immutable social roles and social order provide stability - the front-end model of education was useful. Nowadays, in the era of the postmodern where a new technology dominates and everything (knowledge, information, technologies, education, market, life) is changing very quickly, the formal education is not enough-, it is necessary to learn throughout the whole life. The term - learning has been emphasised and not education as previously. On this basis, it could be concluded that education is a response to social changes and needs of people living at a particular time.

Therefore, wanting to show the importance of learning in the information society, it is necessary to show first the functions of new society. Maria Nowina Konopka distinguished the following functions (2006, pp.21-23):

- **Educational-** this function is the global dissemination of scientific knowledge and public awareness of the growing importance of qualifications;
- **Communicative function** is to build a new plane formation of social bonds. The homogenization of culture and the creation of a new type of social groups contributes to the reduction of social sensitivity to cultural, ethnic or religious differences. The purpose of the information society is to allow different groups to operate within one harmonious whole;

- **Socialization and activating-** the essence of this function is mobilization of people who are temporarily or permanently excluded from society. In this context, telework is important;
- **Participatory function-** this function is to create opportunities for the participation in social life (e.g. participation in elections by using new technologies);
- **Organizing function** is to create conditions conducive to competitiveness in the ICT market- the possibility of using this market by all social groups;
- **Protective and control function-** it aims to create mechanisms to defend people and state institutions faced with virtual crime. It is also for creating and monitoring transparent standards in the operation of all entities of the information society.

Functions of information society are expectations of people to the new reality. Analytical pillars and functions of the new society allow us to define challenges to be addressed by a man. It should be noted that challenges should be understood as a risk and the opportunity to develop further. Therefore, modern people must cope with the following challenges:

- Learning to use new technologies- this challenge comes from a technical attribute of society. Ability to use new technology is necessary in the modern world. This challenge is associated with many functions of ITC e.g.: communicative, protective and control or organizing.
- Preventing digital exclusion- this one comes from the preceding challenge. People (mostly seniors and people poorly educated) do not have keyboard skills in the information society are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. Therefore, educational efforts should be implemented to counteract this negative process. This postulate is a response to the organizational functions, according to which we should create opportunity for the social participation for all people.
- Adaptation to rapidly changing life conditions- it is associated with a dynamic change modern society, with rapid advances in technology.
- The need for continuous upgrading and updating of knowledge and skills- it is a result of educational and activating functions as well as protection, and socialization. The continuous learning is necessary to keep up with the pace of change and the rapid obsolescence of knowledge.
- Changing nature of work (telework)- this challenge comes from technology aspects of society, and with functions: participatory, socialization and activating. It should be noted that work becomes more flexible, fragmented, often using new technologies (on-line). It will be adjusted to the needs older employees.
- New types of communication- it is result of technology development. It is dominance of indirect interaction instead of the „face to face” one. It comes from the communicative function of an information society.
- The ageing population. This function is not a direct result of the technical aspects of society, but it is a parallel processes, typical for modern world. Contemporary developed societies are also ageing. The proportion of older people is increasing steadily which is causing many social and economic problems. Therefore this challenge should be stressed in these reflections about challenges of civilization.

It can be seen that the quality of contemporary society is different from societies in the past. Therefore, learning is a strategic pillar of the new reality because it allows people to find themselves in these unpredictable times. The idea of lifelong learning, which reflects that all life is an unceasing process of learning, allows combining knowledge from formal, informal and non-formal education. It is very important, because recently man needs the specific knowledge which allows to use new technology, new types of communication or taking new types of job (on-line). Learning enables the acquisition of useful skills which are necessary today.

Moreover, in the report of the IBM Community The Information Society is defined as: „A society characterised by a high level of information intensity in the everyday life of most citizens, in most organisations and workplaces; by the use of common or compatible technology for a wide range of personal, social, educational and business activities; and by the ability to transmit and receive digital data rapidly between places irrespective of distance” (The Net Result – Report of the National Working Party for Social Inclusion). In this definition, it was stressed that the ability of using new technologies in every areas of people activities is a strategic element to define the information society. Furthermore, in the modern civilization not only specific knowledge is important but also social abilities such as adaptation, skills of working in group, ability to select the information and critical thinking. It should be pointed out that to get this knowledge and abilities, a man needs three forms of education (formal, informal and non-formal) which are mutually complementary.

Education and learning has got a strategic meaning, especially in face of the challenges facing an ageing population. It is a very serious problem because at present, 17.4% of all Europeans are aged 65 and older. In 2020, the share of those over age 65 will rise to 28% (Stula, 2012, p.2). Therefore, in response to these, changes the European Union has taken a number actions. For example the year 2012 was the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations and there was a comparative research activity rate of older people- Active Ageing Index undertaken.

It has already been mentioned that older people are at risk of digital exclusion and social marginalization. It should be pointed out that social integration is one of the three pillars (health, integration and participation) of quality of life in the older age (Tesch-Römer, et. al., 2012, pp. 4-11). Moreover, the process of an aging population means that older people represent a significant part of the population and consequently the marginalization of this group may result in slowing the formation of the information society.

As has already been indicated among the listed challenges of the information society, there are both risks and opportunities. The task of man and society lies in taking actions which will minimize risk but allow the use of the positive potential. Meeting these challenges is possible thanks to the wider understanding of education. This position is consistent with the postulates of a report by Jacques Delors. In this report it is stressed that: „The concept of learning throughout life is the key that gives access to the twenty- first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinction between initial and continuing education. It links up with another concept often put forward, that of the learning society, in which everything affords an opportunity of learning and fulfilling one’s potential (...)”. Further, „It is the role of education to provide children and adults with the cultural background that will enable them, as far as possible, to make sense of the changes taking place. This presupposes that they are capable of sorting the mass of information so as to interpret it more effectively and place events in a historical perspective” (Delors, et al., 1996, p.35- 38). In this position, authors drew attention to the threats and challenges of modern civilization and the increasing globalization

processes It was noted that education consists of three dimensions: formal, non-formal and informal. Nowadays, we can notice the increasing importance of non-formal and informal education. As has already been mentioned the aim of learning is self-development of a man but also the adaptation of people to the new reality. For this reason the biographical learning is very popular, especially in education of older people. Peter Alheit pointed that: „Biographical learning is both a constructionist achievement of the individual integrating new experiences into the self-referential „architectonic’ of particular personal past experiences and a social process which makes subjects competent and able to actively shape and change their social world” (2009, pp. 125-126).

In summary, education understood globally contributes to the elimination of existing inequalities. The task of education is to equip all individuals with the competence to enable them the smooth functioning in the modern world. Thus, the lifelong learning can be seen both in terms of individual development, as well as in terms of the development of the information society.

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AGING IN THE INFORMATION SOCIETY- NEEDS FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF MEMORIES AND BONDS

THE MACRO PERSPECTIVE

The Western highly developed societies have problems with aging (Okólski, 2004). The increasing number of older citizens is a kind of warning of the bigger social problems. Governments and local authorities will have find solutions for their budgets, devastated due to the increasing costs of social security for older citizens.

Fortunately, the stable progress of medicine, the increasing quality of life and health awareness of the average person permit longer lifespan and better conditions. This means that in some cases people can work longer, not only increasing their personal income but also continuing to contribute to tax and social insurance systems. What is also very important in this context is the fact that the modern work is more and more intellectual meaning less physical stress on the human and people are able to work longer if they want to work longer, but only if their work is pleasant and continues to give them enough satisfaction.

Usually the aging of a society means increased conservatism and stagnation. But that would be against the second very important developmental trend: the impact of the new communication technologies (Straś- Romanowska, 2012).

The increasing array of electronic gadgets in daily life could cause marginalization of the older citizens. In a world in radical and fast change there is the problem to „survive’ even for the youngsters. Every new gadget needs specific knowledge. Without new information and instructions there is no chance to use it at all (Levinson, 1998).

The older generation will need instant help in every case, where machines with microchips are used- this means that some sort of assistance will be needed every day and everywhere.

There is only one way to avoid this situation. We need to rebuild contacts and communication between the older and the younger people. The main question is how to do it?

Both trends, the aging of the society and the impact of the new technologies are facts. There is no way of reducing the trends or avoiding the results. Many theories, which try to explain the roots of aging society, can indicate, nor suggest a pattern of behaviour as possible resolutions. The only simple and effective way seems to be investment in families but it is very hard to change the preferred life style. In western modern societies family, children and social reproduction are not at the peak of the values hierarchy. Rather the opposite , attributes such as individualism, independency, self-creation, fulfillment, are more significant.

For the older generation the stable place in the family is very important. For many, aging loses its place in the family to become the latest social role, which could be successfully fulfilled and which defines the most important developmental task for their age. Without family there is no reason for seniors to define the tasks and the meaning of life in late adulthood. Especially in the „early‘ late adulthood.

The lack of family contacts leads to the feeling of permanent abandonment or solitude. To avoid these unpleasant feelings, seniors have to find new contacts or new hobbies and rebuild the social bonds with non- family members in the society.

In the wider social perspective we need more research and social programs, which can animate inter- generational cooperation. There is a need for cooperation among many institutions, such as universities, non- governmental organizations and local authorities (Zakowicz, 2012).

THE MICRO PERSPECTIVE

The rise of the information society is a challenge for the development of seniors but also a kind of resolution for their problems. The older citizens have to face not only the problem of being conducted/ taught by the younger instructors, who are more adept in new technologies. They have to struggle also with some economic and health problems such as:

- lower incomes,
- lower memory capacities,
- some diseases related to the age (for example: hypertension, diabetes, hyperlipidemia).

The problems are more dangerous to the lives of seniors, if they stay alone. This is very often the chosen pattern of life in the modern society because of the processes changing in family life.

The lonely aging is the end of many processes, which had started a long time before.

Firstly it is a result of the changing in the structure of the family. In the post figurative cultures (stable, without quick changes) families were usually multigenerational (Mead, 1978). The communication was more natural and without barriers. The younger generation was brought up by the older and the oldest, who were a kind of guards of wisdom and knowledge.

In the pre figurative cultures of the Western world, seniors are losing their privileged position, because there are a lot of intensive changes during the life of one generation. The older citizens are more conservative and they accommodate the new patterns of behaviour slowly. Without help from the youngsters, who are more efficient in using of ICT, they will be marginalized.

The knowledge about possibilities of use of existing ICT tools is only a beginning of the wider and deeper development. That means new developmental tasks and new challenges but the most important is the possibility of participation in virtual worlds and communities. The virtual worlds could deliver more services and goods than the real world, many goods are cheaper or higher quality. The virtual communities could help in individual problems and deliver new knowledge- also about new technologies.

Of course there serious dangers like fishing, fraud, and theft. This is the reason

why seniors should be taught the ICT very carefully and with help of the non- virtual teachers. The only problem is that not everyone could be a teacher, because that needs a specific knowledge about rules of adult education. A frequent and common mistake is teaching seniors in the family, when „the teachers‘ don‘t have any idea about rules of teaching at all. In almost every case the non- professional „teachers‘ lose patience and stop teaching. The seniors feel guilty because of their limited capabilities of memory and slow pace of learning of the totally new subject.

WHAT SHOULD BE EXPECTED

Aging and the information society seem to be totally opposite realities. The changes in ICT do not fit in with the society of seniors, and the older citizens have problems catching up with new patterns of behavior and rules for using of the new gadgets.

Seniors, who are at the end of their professional paths, are usually unaccustomed to using new technologies. The most grave problems arise for seniors who have been retired for a longer period of time. These older citizens have also lost contact with:

- family- when the children grew up and decided to have their own families;
- colleagues- when they „abandoned‘ their job and professional duties;
- friends- when the members of the close environment were dying.

In the case of the younger generations it is not so tragic, because they can find new friends, colleagues and groups of interests via the Internet. The older generations have only the traditional media, if they want to find new friendships and to build the new social bonds: newspapers, radio, television and of course agencies- like the matrimonial agencies. Only some of the traditional media could be used as a tool for rebuilding the social bonds between normal citizens and the using of the traditional ways of rebuilding social bonds is much more difficult. It is not only a simple click of the mouse.

The older generations are marginalized not only in the normal way in the real world, but they cannot access any of the opportunities of the virtual worlds, which are offering not only the new bonds but additionally, chances for education.

EDUCATION AS THE WAY FOR ACHIEVING OF VARIOUS PERSONAL GOALS

The bridges of understanding between generations should be built in two different ways simultaneously.

In the traditional way, in formal education, we could prepare learning programs, which will be focused on aging as a real future of the body and which will educate about psychological problems related to age. This kind of learning program should be taught in schools and prepared even for the younger pupils. It is important to communicate to young people the rules of life, which will allow them to retain healthy life in late adulthood. The right behavior should be training for all the life and it should be started as soon as possible.

In the pre-cultural way the new technologies of communication could be a reason for educational meetings, discussions and for the process of creating common inter-generational values. The meetings have always a kind of hidden program- it means that the younger could learn how the older citizens think, learn and act and the older generation should not feel marginalized or abandoned.

The development of civilization has two sides. In one way it is building of the comfort of life. It means that every civilization is hungry for new technologies and practices, ways of resolving problems, techniques, more and more useful procedures. On the other hand, the moral stabilization of society, a kind of high level wisdom could ensure that only the older generation, which has the appropriate experience to judge the ethic and moral dimentions of acting and procedures. These two ways of changing and judging of reality should always be treated as coherent.

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EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY OF ELDERLY PEOPLE IN RELATION TO CONTEMPORARY LIFE CHANGES

„The concept of learning throughout life [...] emerges as one of the keys to the twenty-first century. It goes beyond the traditional distinction between initial and continuing education. It meets the challenges posed by a rapidly changing world”
Jacques Delors

The topic of this paper concerns educational activity among elderly people which seems to be significant in relation to contemporary life changes. On the one hand, the said activity enables continuous improvement and knowledge procurement. On the other hand, it helps seniors to adjust to new, dynamic surrounding. 21st century societies are called societies of „constant change”. But it cannot be different while variability, openness and rush are hallmarks of the contemporary world. Societies change along with reality. As Zygmunt Bauman claims „our world, a world of ubiquitous modernity, surprises us constantly: what today seems to be certain and in the right place, may tomorrow occur as a pathetic mistake, something vain and absurd (...) we constantly need to be ready for changes. (...) We, therefore, need more information about what is happening, and what may happen” (Bauman, 2011, p. 5).

Rapidly developing changes in civilization, generating new phenomena, compel the taking of initiatives aimed at recognizing and understanding, and adapting those changes. The fact that education, knowledge and information become significant should not be surprising, though. Education becomes an element, an absolute prerequisite, and the need for unremitting learning becomes an undeniable must. Olga Czerniawska validated this theory, claiming that: „a smart, thoughtful, well-educated group of elderly people is a social corpus. They are not a drug to family, global and local society. Education become very important in older age, it is not only an exercise for the brain, but also pleasure and adventure. This innocuous studying creates a role model of positive ageing and contributes to popularizing education as a value which enriches lifestyle” (Czerniawska, 1998, p. 13).

The problematic aspect concerning educational activity among elderly people highlights increasingly growing interest – not only in academic circles. This educational activity appears as one of the most – if not the most important – goals of education among adults. That is why the development of the scope and constant research on educational ideas is immensely important, not only for pedagogues. „Lifelong learning,

as a civilizational requirement, becomes one of the most frequent educational issues brought up in social debates lately. Lifelong learning is the goal for many organizations affecting European political life in a wide aspect" (Solarczyk-Ambroziak, 2002, p. 20).

Ageing of our society, understood as growth in the amount of older people (in relation to general population numbers) and a simultaneous diminution in the amount of newborns, is a phenomenon which imposes significantly on the conformation of society in the 21st century. It is impossible not to see the scale of the changes in social structure caused by such dynamic demographic alterations. The amount of people of so-called „retirement” age (post-productive) is large, that is why different actions, which seem to be essential, are being highlighted (including educational activity). As Agnieszka Nowicka points out: „nowadays, old age is not perceived as stagnation, pending a passive death. It is a phase of life, during which a person has to fulfil many tasks which facilitate adapting to new conditions, enrich personality and give new meaning to life” (Nowicka, 2008, p. 128). Consequently, taking up any kind of educational activity by elderly people seems to be crucial in both individual and social contexts. It furnishes them with the prerequisite instruments which help to recognize and understand the spectrum of oncoming changes. These instruments also help in acquiring knowledge, which enables them to function in new reality. According to Lucjan Turowski „the dynamics of social life, science, technology, art and cultural development is the factor in the idea of lifelong learning. The goal of lifelong learning (permanent, constant, unremitting) is preparation to cope with civilizational, cultural and social development” (Turowski, 2004, p. 53). Lifelong learning also enables us to change public opinion on senescence, perceived often enough as a moment of social retreat and invisibility. It is quite obvious, though, that education allows us understand the world and enables us to participate in it. That is why educational activity is important, especially for people in so-called late adulthood who must develop as:

- a) „free and able to be responsible for one’s life
- b) aware of one’s subjective rights for taking part in social and civilizational development, labour-market and consumption
- c) ruling one’s life powered by one’s life plans (...) and lifelong learning
- d) handling one’s personality dynamically and making an effort to change oneself to avoid being pushed to the margin of life; planning and self-determining, developing and making things important to oneself and others” (Dyrda, 2003, p. 179).

Older people as a social group are exposed to the process of degradation, social exclusion and many more negative phenomena. Taking into consideration the quality of life, elderly people should spot the potential present in all kinds of educational initiatives. The idea of lifelong learning is not only the offer of activity for elderly people, it is somehow essential. This theory may be validated by Janusz Morbitzer’s words: „only lifelong education enables the update of qualifications and allows us to adjust them to current requirements” (Morbitzer, 2013, p. 17), it is „an image (in people’s minds) of understanding the necessity for continuous improvement, learning, solving new, complex problems of social and individual life” (Turowski, 2004, p. 53).

Education is a supremely essential element of adult life, it is the chance to achieve high quality of life. It establishes opportunities:

- to fully participate in social life
- to achieve satisfaction of life

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- to acquire knowledge
 - to constantly update knowledge
 - to understand changes
 - to build positive self-esteem
 - to increase the feeling of „causative power“
 - to feel independent
 - to open new, unknown experiences
 - to overcome fear of the unknown
 - to develop passions and interests
 - to stimulate reflection
 - to increase the sense of the meaning of life
 - to self-realization,
 - to live an authentic, meaningful life

According to Olga Czerniawska „educational aspects of quality of life consist of the acceptance of reinterpretation of one's experiences, one's past. It is crucial to realize the forgotten and underestimated value in one's past, to somehow live it all over again for one's development, for a better life in the present, for the acceptance of personal change through maturation till today, till tomorrow (...)“ (Czerniawska, 1998, p. 14). That is why it is not possible to omit the very value of education, and its impact on the quality of life of elderly people, their „world participation“.

Jacques Delors lists four basic goals of education: learning to belong to society, learning for knowledge, learning to work and - last but not least - learning to exist (Delors, 1998, p. 17). The foregoing goals, researched in the context of older people, shows that the very process of education is multi-faceted (complex). The process concerns not only seniors but society as a whole. It constitutes a starting point for achieving, expanding and updating knowledge, understanding the reasons and effects of social, economic and cultural changes. One of the most fundamental aims of senior oriented education is to listen to their needs and respond to them. A crucial element of this is the activation, motivation and stimulation of elderly people, ingraining a participation in social, cultural and political life, showing proper praxis.

According to L. Turos, „the process of lifelong learning is being fulfilled by individuals independently, in groups or as a part of certain institutions. This process is somehow regular (...)“ (Turos, 2004, pp. 54-55), and adjusting to its rules „is the key to success in the process of lifelong learning“ (Turos, 2004, p. 55). Turos lists the following rules of continuous learning:

- rule of directing lifelong learning to individual and social goals;
- rule of mindful, self-imposed, disciplined participation in the process;
- rule of combining practical experience with theory;
- rule of unity between knowledge, ability and habit;
- rule of searching for content, forms and methods of learning adequate for the individual;
- rule of combining learning, self-education and self-improvement;
- rule of rational content choice;
- rule of self-aware progress control (self-education and lifelong education);

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- rule of respecting self-education theory recommendations
 - rule of checking the usefulness of knowledge and abilities acquired in the process (in practice);
 - rule of comparative analysis of problems and contents of lifelong learning process;
 - rule of renovation, restructuring and update of acquired knowledge;
 - rule of personal engagement in the process of self-education;
 - rule of comparing different sources of knowledge." (Turoso, 2004, p. 55).
 - Older people may be described as a group with special educational needs. Going further, senior oriented education is a specific phenomenon. What differentiates this kind of education from any other type is the fact that elderly people most eagerly learn when:
 - acquired knowledge is used in a practical way;
 - the educational process is self-imposed;
 - the atmosphere during classes is favourable (no stress);
 - the acquired knowledge is connected with what one already knows;
 - theory is illustrated by „examples from life“;
 - knowledge is transmitted in an interesting way;
 - one feels comfortable and safe;
 - the prospective results are seen as „attainable“;
 - the teachers pay attention to equal treatment during the process;
 - the „freedom of speech“ rule is respected during classes;
 - the participation in the process of creating (and moderating) classes is possible (impact on the content, timing);
 - the expectations on both sides are clearly stated from the beginning;
 - mistakes are not pointed out in public;
 - education responds to life challenges;
 - the possibility to learn „through life“, profiting from one's experiences.

In highlighting the conditions which foster the educational process among elderly people, it is also crucial to pay attention to difficulties which show up leading up to a successful educational process. These are :

- fear of the unknown;
- a lack of belief in one's abilities, and awareness of one's weaknesses;
- low self-esteem;
- previous, negative educational experiences;
- fear of change, lack of comfort;
- fear of personal defeat, fear of being worse than others;
- prejudices, falling prey to stereotypes, mistaken beliefs;
- lack of motivation, lack of engagement;
- a sceptical attitude towards education;
- fear of being judged, especially in front of a group;
- lack of need to develop, acquire knowledge and gain new experiences;
- the opinion that educational activity in older age is useless.

It is not surprising that the image of being old has still have negative connotations. This stage of life is perceived stereotypically. According to these stereotypes, being old means:

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- the time of retreat, step back from social and professional life;
 - the moment when the „profit and loss account“ is negative;
 - a stage deprived of spontaneity;
 - a stage full of death and evanescence related thoughts;
 - the stage in life when one does not learn anything new;
 - a time when one concentrates on family, grandchildren, when the basic role is as grandma/grandpa;
 - the stage deprived of activity, aspirations;
 - the moment when relation with friends and colleagues loosen;
 - a time of general discouragement in terms of education and taking new initiatives;
 - the stage of suspicion and even hatred towards unknown and unfamiliar things;
 - a time when memory deficits appear (problems with acquiring knowledge, remembering).

Nowadays, seniors create ever increasing numerous social groups with an enormous potential as yet unknown. As a social group encumbered with stereotypical luggage, elderly people seem unproductive, deprived of the potential to create, unadjusted to social expectations, retracted, and even socially „useless“. This image leads to their exclusion. Considering the amount of negative opinions towards old age, one of the most important goals of education among elderly people is to change the perception of seniors - to neutralize the effects of detrimental stereotypes, to transfer knowledge and information about old age (as a stage of life that can be as interesting and valuable as any other stage), and to promote appropriate educational methods. „The stimulation of seniors' minds through a continuous acquisition process seems to influence their quality of life“ (Szpunar, 2013, pp. 46-47). That is why activities focused on knowledge development are so important. Special attention should be paid to educational methods of great potential used in the process of teaching. For instance, the biographical method, when the biography of the person is analyzed „to get to know the figure – his or her system of values, sensitivity, decisions ; but also to see the whole social world somehow written into his or her life“. Seniors themselves, have here the opportunity to learn – learn from life.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the taking up of educational activity by elderly people is a great chance to change the image of old age. It is a chance for elderly people to be seen, to change social attitudes towards themselves, and to reveal their economic potential. The feeling of alienation and exclusion may be reduced, and the general situation of seniors may develop for the better. The change of status in family and society, appreciation, the opinion that old age may be a valuable stage of life and finally showing that profit and loss account may be positive in older age – these are some of the most important changes to be accomplished in today's society.

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**AROUND MEMORIES,
BIOGRAPHIES AND RESEARCH**

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COMMUNICATING ONE'S OWN LIFE STORY: PATTERNS IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND PSEUDOAUTOBIOGRAPHY

The issues that emerge from the consideration of the autobiographical genre are as varied as those studied. However, a match is assumed between the person who is the subject of the story and the author who writes the text. On the contrary, a number of problems of identification can arise depending on the synchronization between the creator, the author and the narrator, aesthetics and content of the (alleged) self-representation might be affected. Thus, the equivalence, or not, between the person described and the author may create a dilemma that can be called autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical. Leaving aside the American criticism, which considers the autobiographical as a novel category, questions of definition and classification are shown especially controversial. International critics have not reached any agreement with regard to issues of synchronous definition, neither as regards to the diachronic matters of genesis or origins that can help us to understand this phenomenon completely.

OVERVIEW

From the theoretical point of view, autobiography, as a genre, has demonstrated difficulties, while leaving room for multiple interpretations. Studies regarding this kind of work have increased much in recent years. The review of different countries, especially France and America, has been discussed in extensive discussions without reaching agreement on the one hand, on a clear and functional definition of the autobiographical and its subgenres, and, second, on the various assumptions made about its genesis and evolution.

These two aspects are fundamental to clarify the position that autobiography occupies in a classification of literary genres. They have given two different critical perspectives: First, the formal-deductive orientation deals with defining, in a synchronous key, a modern model as opposed to other related and neighbouring forms with respect to other types of writing. The historical and aesthetic orientation is concerned, however,

with the evolution of autobiographical forms in the history of literary genres, studying its characteristics in different historical periods, influences of a model in later works, or possible transformations, partial or total.

According to the review of the different countries, just one of the orientations develops predominantly and, in general, from the seventies, we may find more formal methods, semiological and deductive. These have been gaining ground on the historic, aesthetic or empirical methods.

The theoretical difficulty of the genre seems to derive from its intermediate position, riding in a double border: the literary-extraliterary, one the one hand, and the reality-fiction on the other. The uncertain placement between literary/non-literary has been noted by several critics, since, as it is known, only some of the texts called autobiographical meet aesthetic requirements. The constant presence of the author as subject can nullify the aesthetic character of the work, because at the base, it is present all the time with her/his absence, separation, inevitable departure, autonomy, otherness...

The problem of the literary status of autobiographical texts is a complex one. Critics such as Julia Kristeva notes that „literary” is a label that depends and varies according to the times, ideology or culture of a society, and along the same lines, Michel Butor believes that if we reflect on the notion of genre, it becomes clear that what is called „literature” is nothing more than a literary genre among others. The tendency to separate literary writing from the rest of the written production is balanced when it comes to be defined, for which, you have to relocate it with respect to the entire written production.

Regarding the opposition written work/text, the autobiographical can be embodied, according to the will of its author, in subgenres that are more responsive to the demands of the work, such as the Autobiography, Memoirs, Confessions etc. or subgenres that correspond more with the notion of text, such as Journals, Notebooks, Pieces, etc.

When talking about texts, the sense is that of authors like Roland Barthes, in which „text” and „biography” are two concepts closely related. In the text, the author describes her/himself as one of its characters; she or he becomes, therefore, an *author of paper*. Her/his relationship with what has been written is not paternal and privileged, as this relationship is found in the work, but fun: her/his life is no longer the origin of her/his stories, but a story challenging the book.

THE BREAK: AUTOBIOGRAPHY

At this point, it is necessary to talk about the autobiographical and pseudo autobiographical privileged and organic relationship. Both genres are inclusive and encyclopaedic, which can adopt the same expressive procedures. The autobiography, because of its peculiarities, behaves as a willing recipient assimilating other genres: first, because the self-representation is not subject to the rules of time or rhythm; second, the author does not follow any stylistic guidelines; third, the author can and is able to choose the more convenient way to write the images that he or she wants in order to describe/write/imagine themselves.

The first group would group together autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, letters and self-portraits, and in all of them the condition of the triple identity between author-narrator-character would be fulfilled. Among the latter group, it should be considered as

different types of the novel: autobiographical (as well), epistolary etc., in which, however, the identification occurs only between the narrator and the character, not to the author.

The issue of identification is a problem that affects the aesthetics of the literary work. As Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin suggests the identification between author and main character is a *contradictio in adiecto*. The author is the artistic whole and, as such, may not match with the character that is only part of it. Personal coincidence in life, between the person who is speaking and the speaker does not eliminate the difference of these two moments of artistic whole.

The distinction between author-person author-creator is essential, in the sense that the latter is constantly present in the work but does not become part of a new figure, objectified within it. Although the author creates an autobiography or an absolutely truthful confession, her/himself, as created, is outside the represented world. At the time of writing the writer is already out of space and time in which the event takes place. The world can be represented the more realistic, the truer, but it can never be chrono-topically identical to the real world shown, in which the author-creator finds his/herself.

In the same opinion, Sandro Briosi speaks of a false equivalence, both the novel and the autobiographical, between author and narrator. In both genres, the narrator-witness is necessary, albeit for opposite reasons. In the novel, through their presence, the author is free to identify with the character without believing that it is him/her, while in the autobiographical, he/she becomes the recipient of the narrative. In the same line, Cesare Segre believes that distinction is essential the between author and narrator. The narrator that says „I” reveals a moral personality, with individual reactions, and a specific idiosyncrasy, not to be confused with the real author, of whom stylization is voluntary and sometimes unfaithful.

The issue seems more complicated if we take into account the trend of the structural review, especially the French and the Anglo-Saxon New Criticism, when separating the author from her/his text, founding the theoretical status of autobiography on philosophy, literature, sociology and psychology, but regardless of the historical references or ideologies. Consequently, they proclaim the death of the author (Barthes, 1982) in a genre, which commemorates more than any other, the triumph of the subject.

The answer of Philippe Leujene to all these objections is that the subject's relationship with the subject-author-character is not that of identity but of identification to something that has been given the name of a person. The autobiography is the literary genre that, by its very own content, best expresses the confusion between author and person. The deep subject of the autobiography is the name by which the person named author, claims her/his entire existence. The proper name placed on the cover of the book is an extra-textual reference, which refers to a real person, who, in this way, places the responsibility for the enunciation of all written text. In many cases, the presence of the author is reduced only to the name, but the space is reserved to this name is fundamental: it is attached, by social convention, to the commitment of responsibility of a real person, whose existence is beyond doubt.

As we have seen, this notion of a real author, who P. Leujene included in the definition of the autobiography, is according to Nora Catelli, a real *contro natura* act in contemporary criticism. And indeed, P. Leujene, aware of the extratextuality of this element, corrects himself partly using the theory of utterance to say that there is a target consisting of the proper name, and therefore, it changes from individual to individual. In the proper name, the real person and the speech articulate before joining the grammatical

person. So, when the reader grabs an autobiography, it is expected to contain, unlike in the novel, the truth about the author's life. Exceptions and abuses of this trust to the reader confirm no other than the general credit of this kind of social contract.

The shapes of the autobiographical pact may be very different but all of them are designed to honour the signature itself. The reader may ruminate about the resemblance, but not the identity. So, P. Leujene reformulates the definition of autobiography and other autobiographical genres (diaries, self-portraits, essay...) in this way: the autobiography (which tells the life story of the writer) assumes the identity of the name of the author (with her/his name on the cover, at the top of pages), the narrator of the story and the expressed character. This triple identity between author, narrator and character, which is reflected in the name, can be set in two ways:

1. Implicitly, through the autobiographical pact of the author-narrator, by means of two actions:
 - a) The title, which leaves no doubt about the fact that the first person refers to the author („Story of My Life“, „Autobiography of“, etc.);
 - b) Preface or comments within the text, in which the narrator engages with the reader to behave as the author.
2. Explicitly, through the name that the narrator-character is given in the text, which is the same as the author of the cover.

PSEUDO-AUTOBIOGRAPHY

For pseudoautobiographical texts (such as the novel of memoirs or the epistolary novel), also written in first person, a covenant pseudoautobiographical act can be considered. This happens because the autobiographical project is mixed with the novel structure that responds to a „novelistic pact“. This pact holds an opposite sign which includes two aspects: non-identification (the author and the character does not have the same name), and the nature of fiction (novel subtitle on the cover of the book).

The autobiography and diary triple identity also ensures ethical and moral convergence. The author and narrator represent the same moral values, whereas in the novel in a diary form or autobiographical novel, the lack of this identity may mean differences in the sense that, between the author and the events described, a storyteller ensures a limited vision, with own judgments and opinions.

Concurrently on the autobiographical style, aesthetic vision of the author is an irreducible surplus relative to the ideological vision of the character, whose life and discourse are encompassed in the optical appearance of the author. The events of her/his life are just an artistic activity. In a pseudoautobiography, it may happen that the character speaks the moral, political or religious ideas of the author, but at the same time, the work assumes an aesthetic value, a separation occurs between them. The artistic vision of the first dominates the ideological vision of the hero or author-person.

Pseudoautobiography and autobiography are distinguished by a different aesthetic position of the author. In the first, the author is out, and this exotopy is the determining factor of his/her artistic vision; the second, the artistic form depends on the dialectic of the author's identification with his/her character, which if it is full, it would be reduced to zero all the artistic condition.

The author-person autobiographically accounts of his/her own image and presents her/himself with a direct word. The author-creator or pure author of the novel is continuously present, since the pure principle representative takes place, but he/she never becomes part represented, his/her image is subtracted by the invisibility and silence.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND PSEUDO-AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The autobiography is configured as a path that goes from subject to subject, as text that can be done without the artistic element; the pseudoautobiography is essentially a work which is based on the other, the position that triggers is not the „I“, but the other, the same work is characterized as alien, autonomous with respect to author. As M. M. Bakhtin says, the actual aesthetic activity begins when the author leaves the work to express her/himself, his/her experiences, because the author while acting in the sphere of art gets out of life, and vice versa. In this sense, in some autobiographical genres, such as diaries or letters, life/art tends to neutralize them in the total identification of the author with the character; in these cases, the word of the author is the objective word of the author-person, and not the objectified word, indirect, distanced from the author-creator, characteristic of the novel.

The author / character relationship, as a relationship form/content relationship, is the literary word with the word extraliterary life. In this dialectical relationship between artistic representations of the world that, despite jump in life with all its extra-aesthetic values, has an external point of view. This view constitutes the otherness, which is specific to the creative arts form, and involves a creative point of view of the author, in her/his outside position on the represented life.

In the case of the autobiographical character, so that the text assumes the form of an artistic work, the author must find a way to stand out of it; otherwise, the work will have a different tone, and will be presented as a philosophical work or introspection-confession. The literariness of autobiographies depends precisely the distance between the author and the character, the complete non-adherence of the former to the latter.

The literary work stands outside of life, and in this respect bears some relation to death, contemplating earthly things with irony, or with a more or less accentuated comic attitude according to the literary genres and its variants. In the autobiographical work, the aesthetic attitude of the author toward the character and her/himself, as a character in the play, is regarded as someone destined to die, *moriturus*, looking at life from outside, from a transcendent point of view, understanding not only from within but also loving from outside.

The „I“ of the author, who is related to a living experience, when becoming narrator turns into another, related, however, with the narration. The past of the „I“ is a pre-linguistic unity that the narrator turns into a totalizing word. The narrator is an author who has given up acting in the world, and it does not matter if this renounced action belongs to either his/her own or to another person. Whether he/she gets a position away from her/himself (in the autobiography), or he/she approaches the character (in the novel), the result is the same: a life told as a very possible reality.

When the autobiographical style slips into the realm of fiction, the „I“ that appears in the text is not existentially taken by anyone, and refers to a pure invention. Some authors,

like R. Barthes, Maurice Blanchot, Gérard Genette, Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault have helped to fuel a „general discredit of the traditional interest for the author as a real person, interest suspected of being fatally prey to illusions of referential type“.

Pseudoautobiography and autobiography may overlap when using certain resources, but, as noted by Jean Starobinski, the characteristics of a genre when transposed to another can change its sign. The novel can appropriate the use of the first person singular, an autobiographical feature, and this latest can take over the third, typical of the impersonal narrative. Especially in the dialectic of Past and Present, when the „I“ becomes yesterday's „her/him“ because the static script fails to follow the fluctuations of the past. Now, in the autobiography, often using the third person, instead of causing the disappearance of narrator, it is highlighted. The events placed in the foreground will increase the glory of the main character. However, it may happen that the exclusive statement of „I“, typical of the monologue ends up depersonalizing her/him, foregrounding the event.

In the absence of the first person, other substitute signs distinctive of the autobiographical style appear. The reference to the writer may be a periphrasis („the writer“, „who is writing“), or the identification between the author and the character is set in the introduction or context. It is not uncommon to use the proper name, which, when it is replaced by a pseudonym leads the autobiography to the border of the fictional story. Another variant could be the extension of the third person singular, which appears whenever the „I“ who writes takes distance from the „I“ in the Past –because of modesty or cleavage.

The writer of a diary or an autobiography has a special relation with him/herself and with the reality. From this attitude, a special type of writing emerges, and a specific way of structuring the same work with its own rules, a kind of own speech. Even this unwittingly attitude causes a number of effects and functions to the text, which are:

Demonstrative effects: The text is set up as a bet the writer makes to her/himself as well as others, to demonstrate the full value of the „self“ in relation to society, or at least to prove the identity of the „I“. This feature is evident in the extensive use of demonstrative pronouns, especially different types of deixis, creating the illusion of an immediate connection with the events and times, past or present.

Recurrent comparative effects: By which facts or indications are continuous not consecutive scenes, but juxtaposed to each other in chronological order, compared with each other and with the present script, recurrent variants of a single scene (childhood in the autobiography, initial, anyway, in the memoirs or diaries) as an internal preference rule or censorship.

Descriptive purposes: According to which, each narrative element instead of contributing to the moving image of a story, a narrative, shapes the fixed image of a self-portrait. They are, therefore, elements that construct a description, analysis, rather than a story.

Conclusive effects: For each passage, each entry in the end becomes a maximum, a judgment, a conclusion about him/herself. These effects appear from the beginning, from the very first scene: findings in the presentation, when introducing the own secret, as it happens in the diary. This presentation is addressed not only to the contemporaries but, and above all, to future generations, who are supposedly the contradictory addressees of the alleged autobiographical writing. However, regardless of the typological classification, we found that autobiographical and pseudoautobiographical genres mix their waters in modern literature, because of a new relationship between subjectivity and narrative.

CONCLUSION

Modernity is characterized by a subjectivity that is, above all, through the language which means, also in the novel, the prevalence of speech. This insecurity, rather than being manifested in the actions, appears through the discourse of the work. In this context, the characters are defined not by what they do but for what they say or, at least, beyond the narrative scheme of the protagonist-antagonist, which considers the narrative as a duel between the two. Modern narrative gets away from the principles of narratology in order to be set up more like a movement of subjectivity, which is manifested not only in the discourse but also in the narrative, in the actions, which takes the form of books. In fact, the trip and the subjectivity appears in great contemporary authors like Charles Baudelaire, Friedrich Nietzsche, Hannah Arendt, etc.

Another separating feature between pseudoautobiography and autobiography is the referential character and, therefore, the engagement with the reality of the first one versus the fictional character of the second.

According to Mercedes Viano, in autobiographical writing, there is a political dimension which is headquartered in the need to socialize an experience that, through the assessment of the reader, tends to change some social aspects. In this regard, among the motives of the author to talk about her/himself, along with self-esteem, vanity and narcissism, it is important not to forget the need to be, with the narration of one's life, a useful member of/to the society and culture of their own time. The most significant features of a life also assume those of the historical and cultural situation in which it is developed.

The referential nature of the autobiography sets, through the text, a separate communication. The autobiographical text consists of a set of statements/utterances, as opposed to pseudoautobiography, which is consisting of phrases or sentences. From any point of view that considers the term „statements/utterances“ is determined by the actual conditions in which it occurs, i.e., by their immediate social situation, while phrases or sentences do not need a context. The statement –as Volosinov declared– comprises three implicit aspects: space and time of the utterance (where and when), the object or subject of the utterance (what is said), and the relationship of the speakers with what happens (valuation). The autobiographical discourse, through the plurality of discursive subjects and internal languages, sets within the text a dialogue, where the word is addressed towards a particular social recipient. The top recipients – God, posterity, fame – provide the right answer, in a metaphysical space, or in distant historical time. In the dialogue of „I“ to her/himself, this higher target figure as the „third“ of the dialogue, which is silent present, not participating, but „it“ understands, and this understanding is part of the interpretation of the text and, in some way, transforms the overall sense. This understanding will bring a third-target-answer, not an answer from the existing or next targets.

In each „I“, there are three dramatis personae or three voices: the I-for-me (who does not exist outside of the recognition of the other), the I-to-the-other (reflected in the otherness), and the third genuine voice that does not recognize one or the other, and that does not exist outside of the own-another, of their own conscience. The position of this third party (the truth) gives the speech a reference value.

The third moral (the future truth) involves the future ideological discourse. The exercise of the autobiography discourse, especially in some subgenres as the diary, confirms the conception of M. M. Bakhtin on dialogical thought and the absent third, since the same inner monologue is dialogue among many. The multiplicity of the

subject goes through intersubjectivity: the „I“ talks with „me“ or „what others think of me“, and the „social group“ to which he/she belongs. In the autobiography, the complex position of the author and character reveals a new polyphonic structure of the human image, similar and different.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL METHOD

The autobiographical method in educational practices identifies the person as the author of their own reality; personal history becomes, thanks to the narrative, a process of reflection and learning at the same time allowing the narrator to think about some of the events of their life.

Many writers, poets, philosophers, human and social sciences scholars, elected autobiography as a tool and means to look for the truth, by investigating their and other people's lives.

In fact the autobiographical story has always been present in human history. In any cultural era the human being feels the need to set some stages of their personal development, their experience, in order to lastingly outline their past.

Experience in storytelling and in telling about ourselves is part of us as human beings having the desire and ability to communicate with ourselves and with others (human beings wishing and able to communicate with ourselves and with others).

By writing about themselves each individual can communicate their memory, understand which direction their personal existential adventure is taking, leave a trace of themselves beyond time, investigate who we and others are, the place where we live and the time that created us.

The history of the autobiographical tale is long; from Ancient Greece to the present day human beings have told about themselves¹.

The influence of Christianity on the autobiographical genre has been undoubtedly decisive above all in claiming the intrinsic value of every human life, in guiding the discourse upon oneself towards an interior analysis, in shaping a conception of life as a dynamic and dramatic process subject to changes and developments.

Saint Augustine, in his original „autobiography“, launches a modern way to do autobiography², focused on self-supervision of the individual on himself, but

¹ Among the most ancient autobiography models we find the apology or self-defense speech, through which the author tries to justify/explain their attitude and past life before a court or a more or less real group of opponents. This model of „judicial“ speech is already recoverable, for example, in Plato's *Apology of Socrates* and *Seventh letter* or also in *Isokrates's Antidosis*. Anyway, apology is not only a self-defense speech but it can also be a praise speech, thus signing a person's praises, especially for their public role and the results or successes they have achieved. In ancient times this model can be found, for example, in *Emperor Augustus's* (63 b.C – 14 a.D) *Res gestae* as well as in *Saint Augustine's* (354-430) *Confessions*, both representing the most important paradigm for the future development of this genre.

² Thanks to *Saint Augustine's Confessions*, autobiographical storytelling functions, for the first time, as soul history: reconstruction of moral growth and psychological and spiritual expectancy of the individual in their constant confrontation with God. From this point of view his work can be considered as the first

in his work subjectivity is perceived as a bond to what transcends and embraces it, namely God.

Following the concerns of the Middle Ages, autobiographical storytelling arises according to the faith experience that is to say according to the story of the mystical union with God³.

In the Eighteenth Century autobiography arises in the literature just as we know it today. Before this century autobiographies were only those of prestigious people such as rulers, leaders, saints, renowned scholars, and they were written in the form of a praise of the mighty from whom they had receive room and board. The innovation in the Eighteenth Century lies in the idea that anyone can write his own autobiography without being a king or a saint or a genius, provided that their path has a meaning within the society they live in.

However it is only at the end of the Eighteenth Century that autobiography establishes itself as a genre (Herder was the first speaking of „Selbstbiographie“), and for the first time it is used the term derived from Greek made up of those three elements (self; life; writing) which, put together, denote a genre including confessions, diaries and memories.

In his inner biography Jean-Jacques Rousseau gives himself a task: searching for the truth of his nature, by stating the value of knowing one's own self in a world dominated by the gap between being and appearance. Given the opacity and the artificiality characterizing the relationships between different people and between every individual and himself, heart transparency and sincerity are not a fact but rather the goal of an exemplary path to be completed.

Starting from J. J. Rousseau French culture is full of contribution to the autobiographical literary genre, in both the direct form and the critical and theoretical studies.

Between the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century autobiographical narrative loses its naïve trust of representing personality of the individual in his dialectic relationship with the external circumstances. On one side, firstly with Friedrich Nietzsche and then with Sigmund Freud, confidence in the unity of that subject which should be the main subject of this genre fails; on the other side, and at the same time, the deep linguistic

modern autobiography and it is one of the masterpieces of world literature. As stated by Abrams (1971), Saint Augustine was the first who created a genre suitable for representing introspection in an adequate manner to publicly convey it. In his autobiographical work he reconstructs the path of his conversion in his constant confrontation with God, derived from the divine grace paving him the way to a new life. According to Saint Augustine „to confess“ means not speaking to justify or self-defend oneself, it rather means speaking before God, revealing oneself in one's bareness. Saint Augustine's confession is divided on three levels: the *confessio fidei*, or confession of faith; the *confessio peccatorum*, close to the confession proper to the sacrament of penance and, lastly, the *confessio laudis*, that is to say the praise to God because he entered human history releasing it. This last confession is the most important one, because the first two lean toward and result in the third. Through his *Confessions* Saint Augustine states, for the first time, the transition from the objective and closed truth of History to a subjective and impenetrable truth imbued with the dimension of the Divine. Not by chance, the highest point of the *X* book is an essay on those «vast places of memory, where are the treasures of the innumerable images of all sorts of things, introduced by perceptions». It is the first extraordinary dramatized phenomenology of the „memory tale“, an aspect which is often forgotten.

³ An exception to this is Petrus Abelardus's (1109-1142) autobiographical work *Historia calamitatum meorum*, in which the monk and scholastic philosopher recalls the story of his tragic love for Heloise in an absolutely modern awareness of his own individuality and of the creative power of the word.

nature of this subject, which is not given before the language but is built through it, is more and more perceived.

S. Freud gives to autobiography a new role by facing the problem of analysing himself, a challenge never attempted before with such a rigour. His self-analysis, made in the letters to his friend Wilhelm Fliess, brings the autobiographical adventure to its extreme limits. S. Freud, through the rigorous analysis of dreams and free associations, invented a particular form to give a new intensity to the autobiographical language. His theory of the unconscious allowed S. Freud to find a new way to speak of the Self, thus giving an impulse to the progress of human knowledge.

Around the Twenties and Thirties the interest in life stories arises together with the developing of many researches on slums in New Deal America made by the Chicago School whose procedure was carried out through the collection of autobiographies relating to the urban distress, in order to allow communication between different cultures and subcultures. The search for a social urban ecology is supported by interviews, testimonies, autobiographical sheets.

The Chicago School gave much importance to conversation as a form of interaction. Thanks to their contribution the biographical sociological model becomes a bright guiding light for the many methodologies concerning Self-narration and diaries writing.

The autobiographical model is taken up in the Seventies after a period of decline, when self-narration was overlooked and in some cases completely forgotten.

In particular, it begins to develop as an educational trend, in situations of great existential poverty and misery, around the figure of the scholar Paulo Freire, who was creating a new social pedagogy, a „street pedagogy“, by collecting and using the tragic life stories from the campesinos in the brazilian favelas (slums).

In Italy between the end of the Eighties and Nineties, we observe the proliferation of techniques aiming at considering narration evaluative aspects: one of these techniques is the narration as care of one's self, which became more and more successful especially through the method of autobiography in the field of the education for adults.

The autobiographical method is also an educational practice where the person is identified as the author of their own reality; personal history becomes, thanks to the narrative, a process of reflection and learning at the same time allowing the narrator to think about some of the events of their life.

Biographical research in education can help to formulate answers to the questions on identity we ask ourselves and this path can help us to make progress, each of us in our own uniqueness. It will be our biographical ability to enter again in that process of training through the observation of our life path and it will be the way in which we will narrate it to trace the thread of our story. The elements contributing in building our own biographical competence and our aptitude to the biographical research, will be our ability to establish links between our experiences, our memories of the past, our present way of living and our projecting ourselves into the future.

In Italy, thanks to Duccio Demetrio and his continued dedication and study of this subject, it is called „autobiographical method“.

D. Demetrio and his group of EDA (adult condition and training processes) from the University of Milan, have developed a systemic-relational model. According to D. Demetrio autobiography is a highly respectable humanistic and activistic methodology. It is linked to the ancient and contemporary pedagogical tradition which privileged direct contact with things and others, learning from experience, not the simulated but the real dialogue.

The group of EDA works in a training/educational direction, primarily with adults

but it is also aimed at young people, to give an opportunity to the person to rediscover and reclaim its capacity for self-training. With the autobiographical method one is put in front of a white sheet by filling it with one's own words having as protagonists oneself, trying to be as honest as possible in writing: positive events or failures, mistakes, more or less dramatic events of one's life. It 'a work of meta-cognition, that is to say of reworking and transformation of lived experiences, and this inner work let arise new meaning. This process has value for both the writer and the reader.

Demetrio's thinking goes well with what was claimed by Raffaele Mantegazza in proposing a pedagogical approach that places formative telling about oneself, shared narrative and telling stories to each other at the center of the educational relationship: „Without narration and active listening, or more simply without collective narrative I can hardly imagine an educational relationship that pays attention to the idea of cooperation. And without exploring cooperation and conflict, a classroom becomes a Roman jail: from the outside might even seem it dashes straight, but on the wings of a speed that doesn't break any chain" (Demetrio, 2009).

Therefore, on one side we as autobiography goal its power of giving meaning to things and organize even those more complicated and painful situations: any pain is bearable if you put them in a story. On the other side, the transformational aspect of writing, a narration is not an end in itself but is used to know each other better, to review one's experiences and set oneself new course, to let arise from one's own story and from the listening of other people's some useful information to one's professional and non professional life, new teachings, in essence learning: „Don't cry over your story, change your course" (Spinosa, 1990).

If the training function, in the new perspective of a continuous training, is given a value of empowerment and individual resilience, implementation of one's abilities to reduce complexities or at least to manage complexity itself. If it is true that everyone is the product of their heard, lived and also of non experienced stories, it is then inevitable in the training context to find storytelling some space as object, tool and subject of this process.

If the crisis of the modern and post-modern subject and the discovery of its fragility/existential fragmentation could make us fear a decline or perhaps even the disappearance of the autobiographical genre, the many works that are on the market today and the incredible success attained by some of them in recent years, demonstrate beyond any reasonable doubt that this genre is far from in crisis.

Today, in fact, autobiographical narrative knows a new success, due to a greater theoretical and practical processing as well as its diffusion in social and educational and in clinical and therapeutical work, without exclusion of areas and recipients.

In particular, in the training path for educators narration is used to bring out the problems that the educator daily meets while assisting young people or adults in distress, with severe disabilities, people with problems, and to help reflect on the difficulties of educational work in this area (Confalonieri, Scaratti, & Tomisich, 1999, pp.149-163).

Listening to the stories of families and people assisted allows parents and educators to enable reflection on their educational and welfare commitment, triggering intense communication and reflection processes with the team of educators or care providers (Moletto & Zucchi, 2009, p.11-14).

Autobiography is a real training methodology that, before letting people develop some knowledge and competences about something, aims at making people develop a

self-knowledge. Today it is therefore more and more used in training paths for adults involved in formal and/or non-formal education processes, within those very different educational contexts depending on target audience, purposes, structure (university, school, work place, promotion of local and wealth cultures).

Telling themselves allows adults to discover they have a story, to clarify to themselves and therefore re-learn the reasons of their personal and professional path, of their successes and failures and realize that everything they have experienced, consciously or unconsciously, influenced their attitude, their way of acting, thinking, behaving. This forces those involved in this path to look for the meaning and importance of their present being in the reconstruction of their past. Such a reconstruction process is not as simple and natural, but it often causes personal and human pain and strain because it bares unanswered questions, pending choices.

It is precisely this kind of effort to produce results in terms of education of the person, pedagogy's favourite subject. As a matter of fact, people, by recalling their story, take possession of it, become aware of what they need, of their limits and their educational/training needs.

It was precisely adult education that reasserted, with the „self-care“ the value of autobiography as a training method assigning it a pivotal role in the constitution of every personal „adulthood“ (we are subjects-people if we become aware of ourselves, therefore of our experienced life story, therefore of our autobiographical path, which we have to re-think auto-biographically) and also in the training of trainers, that is to say those subjects who, as their profession, have to „take care“ of other subjects, exerting „power“ on them through „knowledge“ and acting and who have to be freed as much as possible (and as far as possible) from prejudice, constraints and so on, which stem from one's personal experience and often, too often, act as „unthought“ elements (dogmas, certainties, norms) in trainers conscience.

This also applies to the narrative style. Some people write very didactically- almost as if they were writing a recipe book. Some are more passionate, or more cerebral. Some are able to be ironical about and literally laughing at what they write (even when talking about tragedies). There is certainly a women's style and a men's one, which are evident right from the start. And, generally, from style it is also possible to distinguish, broadly speaking, the writer's age.

Much freedom is also given to content, or periods with which a personal biography deals. The most classic biography is the one following the chronological order of the events the author recalls. But there are some are very interesting, or funny tales, or tales about particular periods. A story may fix a particular childhood or youth period, fatherhood period, a period of illness. So, they can be vertical and horizontal, long or short biographies. People may decide to write their story not necessarily starting from their birth, but from an event that has been a „starting point“ for something new: the year of their marriage, or when they changed job, or that of their graduation, or the year they took a trip... There are also biographies in which the author starts from before their birth, imagining their parents before their arrival, therefore their moving inside their mother's womb, and then imaging their pop up (joyful? traumatic? painful?).

Then there are autobiographies written in the form of a letter, sort of pretending to write to someone (existing or not). There are those written in the first person, but also those in which the author plays a fiction and writes their own story in the third person, as if speaking about someone else, thus emphasizing even more the distance between themselves and the „film“ of their lives. And then there are stories written in

a completely symbolic way, even by resorting to the magic dimension and the fairy tale. These are the most purely „healing“ stories. The ones in which the author looks for a trick, a solution that satisfies their need to get out of their painful situation.

Fairy tale is used in autobiography insofar as the author can not say (or is afraid to say) something that however bothers him. Then he uses symbols and the unreal both to describe and to find solution. In these situations, it is easy (for an educator, or a teacher) the risk of switching from an educational to a properly clinical dimension, which is not their responsibility. But analyzing symbols through an educational point of view is still important for what we stated above: it is important to help young (or adult) people to understand what they mean by that image, why precisely that image and not another one came to their mind, and what are the ways out which that symbol, or the magical event they put into their story, let be imagined

People approaching autobiography, often find the experience so fascinating, giving pleasure and knowledge, that then they are no longer able to do without it! Writing down one's feelings, events, one's emotions, one's meetings, it then becomes a sort of continuous need useful to focus, to reflect, meditate on themselves and the world. Sometimes, there are people who never finish their autobiography, because they continually modify it, correcting re-correcting it, in an endless game of re-remembering, re-discovering, removing, adding, specifying, colouring. Switching from biography to diary, is a frequent path, as well as desirable, because it helps to better understand life experience, the many hows and whys we forgot, choices made in past ages. But a diary, which has always been more widespread among teenagers, is a good cure also for adults, allowing them keep stopping and listening to themselves, even in the daily hurry.

From listening to and telling themselves, to listening to and telling the others. Helping others to write their own story, or help them tell it, in long conversations in which we listen, in almost total silence and, of course, in complete absence of judgment. With such exchange, both protagonists - listener and listened person - grow in knowledge, life knowledge. In short, they grow in wisdom. Educating young people to tell their life story also means educating them to listen to the others. To seek explanations between the lines, beyond appearances. To put themselves into the others' shoes. To be more tolerant, more relativist.

The biographical method is a very useful tool for psychological well-being both in psychological counselling and in the field of psychotherapy. Variants of this method can be used in the course of special discussion and creativity experiences, led by expert guides, which can be moments to deepen one's own self-knowledge. Meetings of this type are generally held in group contexts in which, through autobiographical narration and the subsequent sharing of texts, it is possible to discover unknown resources or needs or, more simply, to share and compare emotions.

In conclusion when talking about autobiography, we surely refer, for the most part, to storytelling. This however can in turn take place with the aid, or the addition, of various techniques and „strategies“. It depends on the narrator's creativity and skills. Some autobiographies are full of photographic images, other are full of drawings, if the narrator is also good at drawing, and then he loves representing with the pencil his memories, some moments he lived, or even symbols of these moments. Then there are stories in which drawings are so important that they become almost comics. Photos and drawings alternate in such a way that eliminating them, the story would no longer be readable. Then there are also people who love putting real objects in their memories

narration: a card, a flower kept in a book maybe for decades, a lock of hair, a letter, a document. As we said at the beginning, writing about oneself is such a personal and private thing, that there are not right methods and wrong methods. Everyone has the right to tell their stories and preserve their memories as they prefer!

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THE EVOLUTION OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND HYPOTHESIS OF ITS ORIGINS

Autobiography and biography are recognized genres today. However, it is necessary to review retrospectively to identify these genres in historical times. Much of the criticism seems to agree indicating that the strictly autobiographical literary tradition begins at about the middle of the eighteenth century, coinciding with the authority and success of the posthumous works of J. J. Rousseau, and the publication of a large number of autobiographies and other writings, especially historical memories, biographies and autobiographical novels, defined collectively as „literature of the self.”

In the eighteenth century autobiography became independent and separated from the trunk of the biography, which preserved order, unity, the only source of the subject of the narrative, but which inevitably moved away to reveal a spiritual revolution in which the model and the artist agreed. The significant number of autobiographies published in this century is, in this sense, the narration of private lives, from a perspective that is not only ethical or religious. This implies the idea of possible or eventual cognitive values of the experience of an individual, without having to be exemplifying.

The question of why it is has been in Western Europe where the birth of the autobiographical genre has been witnessed, and why it has developed only in the last two hundred years has not been answered yet. The fact is that it appears to be in Western culture when certain metaphysical conditions were verified, a result of a Copernican thought, resulting in feelings of individual curiosity astonishment and destiny.

There is a close relationship between an autobiographical phenomenon and the development of modern Western civilization. At the social level, it happens when given certain conditions as the ascension to power of the bourgeoisie and the declaration of equality, following the French Revolution. At the ideological level, Romanticism concedes an emphasis on the subject, and reflects the autobiographical myth of the self, giving more and more space in the literary production, which increasingly manifests the new notion of person and individualism characteristic of bourgeois society.

Autobiography as a cultural problem lies in the birth of subjectivity away from the forms of metaphysics where only theological and teleological unity existed. The itinerary assertion of individuality, as proposed separation and identification process, involves an initial break with the mythology (unity consciousness and destination awareness and transparency). In the history of post-Christian Western culture this gesture is identified with the formation of a humanism that emerges from the Christian

and medieval theological whole. But at the end of this process comes, as we have seen, an eclipse of the subject. The review of the Cartesian, Hegelian subject puts an end to the bourgeois humanistic culture. Psychoanalysis has transformed the cultural conditions of the history of it, transforming it into an hermeneutic „I“, consisting of the constant interaction between consciousness and experience. An „I“ that takes the place of multiple memberships, which is a ghost producing its own ghosts themselves.

With Sigmund Freud it comes to realize that the „I“ and her/his psyche is an oral product and historical time. It's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1955), as virtual autobiography, which provides the intimate dialectic between knowledge and existence, between experience and practice within a changing landscape in which the individual is constantly trying to find their identity. Furthermore psychoanalysis has offered another tool for the biographical studies of reorganization of life, to transform any detail in a symptom that refers to all the mental conformation.

We have to consider also that the term autobiographical represents often a mere terminological convention with the continuity of a genre that persists in the History of Mankind expressiveness. In fact, the word „autobiography“, coined by European critics around 1800, has been retrospectively designated for works of the eighteenth century memorialism, and also precursors such as the *Autobiography* of S. Augustine. According to J. J. Rousseau, designating with this century-and-a-half word the Augustinian confessions -composed in the fourth century- or the *Vita Nuova* late thirteenth century- constitutes an illusory perspective. The same view is shared by Joeri Tynjanov. The author talks about a case of confusion between form and function. Philippe Leujene, meanwhile, identified this error of perspective as an „illusion de éternité“ just because the autobiography in the eighteenth century was just a literary phenomenon with well-defined characteristics. This new genre has little in common with the preceding autobiographical experiences in which there were no conditions that have contributed to founding the modern writing subject. That is, the notion of authorship and the literary use of first-person self-reference.

Some other thinkers such as T. Cerruti have the same opinion. T. Cerruti points out that, in the eighteenth century, the belief that writing ones own story arises not by means of telling the chronicle of external events, but for exploring yourself well in the light of events that have marked.

The publication implies a reading contract, which is not rigid and changes during different periods and authors. And the autobiography as a literary genre is not born, until it becomes as such in the late eighteenth century, when a submerged and scattered tradition of autobiographical writings begins to assume formal and stable structural features. The modern autobiography is the product of a formal stabilization of a material intended in principle to establish a rapport with a small, targeted audience, and in this sense, literary autobiography is the exception and not the norm. As confirmed by Giuseppe Nicoletti, from the late eighteenth century, on the horizon of literary production a new type of recipient for this type of work: autobiography for an audience.

The most controversial part of the criticism is referred to the origins and different paths that will converge and contribute to the birth of the genre in the eighteenth century. Authors such as Georges Gusdorf, Ph. Leujene, Gerald May or Marziano Guglielminetti speak of the persistence of the autobiographical genre in all European national literatures, with preference to the Augustinian tradition, the religious autobiography of the reformed Christianity or the model of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's

confessions. The latter are those that have marked a decisive change of perspective in the History of the genre. It is because of them, the autobiographical narrative unfolds according to the genesis of the spirit and not according to the chronology of events, but because, at the same time, a new aristocracy which is based on feelings and ideas claimed its existence

G. May relates the birth of secular autobiographical literature with the secularization and individualism which began before the Renaissance, and then crystallized in a more individualism characterized Romanticism. Also A. Gagliardi marks the era of humanism as the moment in which the „I“ character is freed from the medieval Christian theological whole.

It was also formulated an opposite hypothesis, according to which the autobiographical writings of the eighteenth century are mainly a result of an earlier secularization of religious form. In the same line, Franco Fortini believes that there were the religious wars of the first half of the seventeenth century, and later the conflict between Jansenists and Jesuits, as the two elements that created the psychological condition of the modern autobiography. The dissident, with a solitary religious experience, takes, with respect to her/his own marked and exemplary life, a different distance than the simply memoirist than the writer assumes.

In either scenario, the fact is that Christianity has played a major role in the Prehistory of the genre. Moreover, autobiography once stripped of religious sentiment, has not ceased to nourish from the Christian tradition, the very essence of the Culture that was developing. The same Rousseau-ish title *The Confessions*, reminiscent of St. Augustine's, indicates that this renewed individualism is born and developed in a Christian atmosphere. Moreover „conscienciae arcane“ or the representation of a spiritual experience -temptations, struggles, falls and wins- are characteristics of the Christian literature.

Authors like G. Gusdorf, we must seek the reasons and religious origins of autobiographical in the consciousness of the individual life and the discovery of „I“, characteristic of devotional literature. In this sense, the wording that the devotee wrote of the stages of his vocation, conversationally without literary pretensions, was intentionally for the edification of one's soul and for the few close around. That is one of the origins of the genre. Consequently, Rousseau's *Confessions* has not started a new genre but simply have desecrated the autobiographical space, replacing the control piety by psychology, and expanding its public outreach to secular readers.

If the Christian hypothesis, with the exercise of self-examination and the given importance to all souls, can illustrate the emergence of autobiographical religious literature, it is not valid to justify other writings -such as the analysis of one's personality instead of a spiritual journey. This is the case of most autobiographies written after Rousseau's *Confessions*, which the perspective of G. Gusdorf determined the decline of the genre, setting a new model, diachronically prototype postponed, a hostile to Christian thought.

The pragmatic approach, said Ph. Leujene and Elizabeth Bruss, offers also a diachronic level, new critical dimensions. Having concluded that it is impossible to reduce the autobiography to a clear and total formula, the French critic says only that it can be considered, as a whole, a way of reading and writing type. The criteria for formation of an autobiographical corpus would, in this way, multiple variables over time and depending on individuals.

The History of the autobiography would be the way of its reading: Comparative history of the relationship of different reading contracts offered through different types of texts and different types of actual reading on these texts. That means that the „autobiographical pact“ that the author provides with the readers changes in each Age.

In the same way of thinking, E. Bruss settles the public taste to the Russian formalists' hypothesis about the mechanisms of evolution of the genre and coined the notion of „autobiographical act“ or „illocutionary act“. This act associated linguistic form of the text in a particular social and literary context, so that the historical range of this drift, depending on the different situations in which the subject writes about his/herself.

Consequently, the same constitutive rules that correspond to the autobiography genre are to change. Following Juri Tynianov theories on the changing nature of gender, E. Bruss says that not only the characteristics that match the generic function of gender change, but also change its artistic value. Although it is possible to identify a steady core of the autobiographical act, there are numerous peripheral variants that led back to the unity of this literary gender, showing their transformations.

Thus the autobiographical discourse in the Antiquity reflects more of a social circumstance than a deliberate literary choice. Widely apologetic, it had to be used to respond to allegations of civil or criminal nature, or commercial propaganda that the person to oneself. Although we can detect constant rhetoric on gender, because the writer through language tries giving a public image that does not respond accurately to reality, these rhetorical constant change over the ages and aesthetic.

In the Greek biographies and autobiographies pedagogical element and the rhetorical commendation element schema predominates. The awareness that the individual has of her/himself is based on aspects of your personality and outward oriented life. In the Roman period, the autobiography retains its public nature but at the same time it serves as a document for the family awareness. The purpose of which is to transmit to future generations the History of the family, clan, lineage. Another important element in Roman autobiography is the role of omens and their interpretation, which is a very important principle for understanding and development of autobiographical material. The lavishes are at the same time, evidence of the personal and individual fate, and public and State luck (success). In this luck are implicit the notions of „talent“, „intuition“ and also „genius“ so important in the philosophy and aesthetics of the seventeenth century.

This notion of „success“ will lose, with the passing of the centuries, their public appearances to become something personal and private. Another major autobiographical forms of the Greco-Roman writings are those where the author speaks of his/her own works. The autobiography goes, in this case, especially to the small number of readers who already know other works by the same author, and they want to know with more details about the time course of the personal life. To this type belong works as *Retractiones* by St. Augustine, or the humanists of modern times as Chaucer and then an important aspect of the autobiographies of poets like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Cesare Pavese and other contemporary writers.

The biographical time that shows off the character, started with Plutarch, will have a universal influence, especially in many of the autobiographies of the Italian Renaissance. Since ancient times, as Mikhail Bakhtin suggests, it begins to manifest a private conscience of the individual, through a series of modifications to existing public ways.

These changes include the introduction of elements such as the satire, irony or good mood in the representation of the one's own person or life, also the importance acquired by the domestic rhetorical forms, especially the kind of friendly letter; Finally,

the appearance of the stoic type, known by the name of Consolations, from Cicero to Hortensio, Saint Augustine and Boethius till Petrarca. In this type, we must also include the letters by Seneca, the autobiography of Marcus Aurelius, Confessions and other autobiographical works by St. Augustine. In all these works, we find a new attitude about the subject itself, which is characterized by the soliloquy with themselves or with the consoling philosophy in the case of the Consolatio.

All these changes indicate a new importance of the intimate and personal, but the genre remains rhetorical and public. Although these old ways will influence the European literature, not only in the autobiographical genre, but also in the novel, the real lonely man (sic) who appears in the Middle Ages, who will also play an important role in the European novel, do not appear yet. From the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, the autobiography, which takes place mostly in England, generically called memories but outside literature, is characterized by a lack of literary aspiration.

Only in the nineteenth century, the term will designate a literary activity worthy of respect. Therefore we must recognize a number of changes that may affect this literary gender: changes in the nature of textual features, for which the generic function of a text is highlighted, changes in the degree of integration of the generic function or other functional aspects of the text, changes in the value of the literary genre, as the social or literary system, changes in the illocutionary value of the generic function. Illocutionary value means the way in which language reflects and, in turn, creates pragmatic situations, typically for relationships between language use and social structure.

The literary evolution, including language development, is a complex phenomenon. The autobiography as we know it depends on the distinction between fiction and nonfiction, including narrative rhetoric or ideally a first person and first empirical account of a person. These distinctions are a cultural product; therefore, the autobiography is conditioned by the appearance or disappearance of other types of speech.

As E. Bruss, other authors like Andrea Battistini stated that the reconstruction of the autobiographical code must be through the induction and contrastive analysis contiguous with other genres. Thus, deformations can be avoided like establishing a precise birth date to coincide with the appearance of a masterpiece (Confessions of St. Augustine or Rousseau), which would be a role model, or like the illusion of an eternal autobiographical act. The autobiographical competition has transformed over the centuries depending on several factors:

- a) Birth or termination of related literary genders. The medieval autobiographism is embodied in forms such as religious Laude which gave way to other forms of expression as the typically Renaissance epistolary.
- b) Of the different relationships between vernacular and national languages. In the Middle Ages, the Romance language was more intimate and expressive than Latin, feature progressively loose when becoming a more prestigious level instrument.
- c) The arising of new expressive techniques, such as - interview autobiographies, film autobiography - in our century.
- d) Autobiography related to the followers of a new religious (life of the Puritans in America), since the eighteenth century on, becomes a literary value.
- e) Interferences, from the eighteenth century, in competition with the autobiographical novel, shape a sharper separation between autobiography and memoirs.

Within our century, autobiographical, like other literary genres, has undergone a process of multiplication and diversification through new communication techniques. And in this context, Marziano Guglielminetti said that the question of literary genres would have to arise between the new forms of autobiography or biography as the interview, the radio dialogue, biopic, etc.

The relationship publication/published, at a print level, parallels the enunciation/utterance level in oral communication. The author/reader relationship is based on implicit or explicit codes of the publication, which determine that the increase and diffusion of the autobiographical works gather the growing public interest shown towards them.

The question of transmission and publication of the autobiographical texts reveals some mechanisms of literary publishing system. First, manipulations can be given or seizure by one or more persons than the author. In the drafting stage, often autobiographical text origin is uncertain. In the oral tradition of the genre, especially, often the author is not a legal person and dictates the story to others who transcribed orally (in the case of many religious autobiographies, Angela da Foligno, St. Ignatius di Loyola etc.) Being published, the figure of the editor can be decisive, often baptising the manuscript, structure or its parts, making corrections or, if applicable, shortening or censoring the original.

Today, the phenomenon of expansion of the autobiography commercially is actually written by a professional writer, offers an example of how readers decode autobiography as texts which are not written by the authors (actors, figures sports, political, etc.). These texts for consumers identify the core of the text genre „autobiography“, defined as the relationship between the elements of content and expression conventionally organized from one or more socially recognized functions, facing certain purposes. The popular autobiography, as shown in Carla Marella, has an undeniable social function. Its elements face a commercial success, and satisfy the curiosity of the public, while proposing a model to imitate. These two elements deeply condition the content and form of the genre, and allow us to identify the commercial autobiography more easily than the „author autobiography“ - an artistic impulse- than the moral and/or commercial issues involved in the first case.

These differences from the point of view of the origin of the text, set two different sorts of pact with the reader: one conservative, in which the author writes about her/himself personally, and on the other, more advanced, where the author of the cover does not match the author who wrote and whose name is not known.

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EDUCATIONAL POTENTIAL OF LIFE EXPERIENCES

In the Encyclopedia of Education, learning is defined as: „the activity aimed at acquiring and collecting individual experience, leading to changes in the behavior of a human or animal” (Pilch, 2003, p.873). According to this, the attainment of new experiences making changes in people’s life. Therefore, it can be assumed that the attainment of experience in specific situations has an instructive value. It seems that knowledge derived from everyday-life experiences has the widest coverage, shapes people’s life and influences them more than other forms of education (Nizniowska, 2003, p.88). How does the potential of educational experiences which are acquired outside formal and non-formal learning manifest itself? The aim of this article is to answer that question.

Before characterizing the education opportunities that are inherent in certain areas of experiencing reality, this kind of learning must be described in relation to other forms of education. In general, there is a distinction between formal education, non-formal and informal in lifelong adult education (Kargul, 2001, p.7). In the first case we are dealing with education emerging from institutional forms of education, in the second of learning from the context of educational activities taking place outside the established formal education, but with a specific educational purposes and discernible groups of participants. While informal learning (otherwise known as learning by doing and incidental or situational learning) is (Nizniowska, 2003, p.88): „the process that actually takes place during the whole of human life, so that individual shapes their attitudes, sets of values, acquire knowledge and skills, using everyday experience and educational influences of their environment (...)” (Kargul, 2001, p.7).

There are few important aspects of informal learning. This kind of learning (Nizniowska, 2003, p.88):

- is accompanied by action in everyday situations,
- exists as a result of ways of thinking, perception, problem solving and cooperation of all participants in the situation,
- builds the knowledge, which is based on situational problem and can only be transferred to a similar position,
- is not separated from the performance and features of the situation - is an integral component and takes into account the quality of the cultural context in which the situation of learning is embedded.

Due to the structured nature and the objectives, the educational value of formal and non-formal kind of education seems to be obvious. But it is more difficult to capture this aspect from the non-formal education, because of the very complex nature of the experience which it is based on. It can be said that it is impossible to describe all the factors

that determine the enrichment of human knowledge which are inherent in everyday events. It is also difficult to make a list of all of life's situations which have educating values. Therefore, the author of this text limits the description of life's experiences to only some of them. The experiences described in the article are connected with the core activity of human life, related to choice and the taking of important life decisions or the overcoming of traumatic and restrictive situations.

Referring to the first of the above-mentioned areas, the author of the text cites the division proposed by Józef Kargul. These are: human corporeality, education in family life, interpersonal relations from the perspective of adult education, leisure and education in the work process (2001, p.7).

On the one hand, corporeality of man is the foundation to acquiring any life experience, on the other hand, care of the body may be the goal of educational research. According to J. Kargul, education is the voluntary and unsystematic cognitive effort of individuals which aims at finding practical solutions. Particularly for people experiencing illness, self-education is of paramount importance in the process of recovery. It can be formed as a constructive education leading to the acquirement of knowledge of an illness for the particular person, or cooperative education, as it takes place not only through self-activity, but also by establishing relationships with other people (Mazurek, 2011, p.61).

One of the main educational values of participation in family life is the learning of the social role as a family member. Without this primary socialization it would be impossible to function in society. J. Kargul for Tadeusz Aleksander indicates that the type of acquired knowledge depends on the stage of the family life. In the first phase, the university education, intermediate education and certain self-education processes take place. After the first child's birth the intermediate education usually occurs. As soon as a child is going to school, parents acquire the new model of being a parent of the student, not just a small child. When children enter the age when they decide to continue a career path, parents must make an effort to face the questioning of their educational methods by adolescents, resulting in a re-familiarizing with the field of education teaching. According to Dzierżymir Jankowski adult education in these dimensions is a self-education, as a priority issue is not gaining as much specific information as a change in a broad context. At the time children leave the family home, adults re-educate themselves, and finally they learn to reflect on the nature of their life.

The educational value of interpersonal interaction is based primarily on the fact that interpersonal communication is the process of creating culture and personality. It plays a special role in education, which is the dialogue of the actors who are involved in the cognitive interpretation of the world, negotiating meanings, values, when meeting people with a common culture (Kargul, 2001, p.79).

Also, free time is an area for gaining new experiences which have special educational value. Through education „in” free time you choose the means to reach and gain some new information. In contrast, education „throughout” free time refers to learning by experience, by imitation and action. In this case, the acquisition of knowledge comes through haphazard or random learning from others and the mass media. Therefore education „throughout” free time is called an „incidental” education.

It is also the obvious relationship between doing the particular job and further training. The experiences acquired during job searching, self-improvement of professional skills, and applying for promotion in the workplace, are becoming sources of knowledge. The important thing is that knowledge gained during work experience is often generally applied to other spheres of life (Kargul, 2001, p.17).

Special types of knowledge which enrich our identity are provided by the experiences of „the critical life events”. Due to their potential, they are even called, according to Grażyna Teusz for Helena Sęk: „the natural experiments of development”. The developmental psychology emphasizes that this phenomenon brings both: a negative charge associated with stress, as well as positive incentive to make significant changes in this development. Filipp Sigrun-Heide points out that the critical events refers to a situation that forces an individual to face the need for change. When this circumstance occurs, an individual must reorganize previous emotional, motivational, cognitive structures which lead him to re-adapt to the new conditions. Man must therefore re-verify the experience of himself, establish his new place in the world and take action by adapting to the new situation (Teusz, 2003, pp.301-303). In Polish literature, Kazimierz Dąbrowski called crises as „positive disintegration” in the sense of a situation which is groundbreaking for an individual, and which forces him to be active in order to change for the better, to reformulate previous ways of thinking, and put into practice new forms of behaviour. The re-organization achieved through this situation leads to creating a new human identity, which is at a higher level than the previous one (Szumigraj, 2009, p. 193).

Examples of events that give rise to tension so strong that they can be considered as critical, are situations involving the taking of important life decisions. These include, among others: the birth of a child, marriage, graduation, career change, retirement, etc.

Erik H. Erikson indicates that at every stage of human life, man should solve a specific crisis, so that he will be able to climb up to a higher level of development. Through the experience of crisis and the creation of challenges in a particular stage of human life, an individual can gain life virtues such as: hopes, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care and wisdom (Bee, 2004, p.40).

Nowadays, the special educational potential is attributed to not only the events which are derived from the normal, undisturbed course of human life, but also to situations that an individual can experience as chaotic and disordered, and which are beyond the „designed course of life „or „cultural scenarios of psychosocial development” (Szumigraj, 2009, p.192).

Such situations, when an individual is unable to decide about his life on his own and navigate it, as it is governed by imposed external forces, are called „trajectories”. This kind of situation triggers an individual’s intellectual effort. In fact, experiencing a trajectory may lead to the „state of floating”, which means a sense of mental and physical suspension in a vacuum. The key to liberation from this situation, as Agnieszka Bron points out, is biographical learning. Looking into past life experiences from the present perspective makes it possible to enrich self-awareness through self-reflection, summarizing, reflection, and recounting one’s own life story to others. Often a major change in life causes intense searching for new strategies of behavior, more awareness in selecting information, faster processing and storage of new knowledge (Mazurek, 2011, pp.60-62).

Despite many universal features of different people experiencing difficult life situations, it should be borne in mind that the condition for the acquisition of knowledge in an informal way is creating a personal form of contact with them. Through the individual dimension of informal learning, each individual makes his own, unique sense of his experiences.

To be able to describe the learning as based on experience, as indicated by Hanna Solarczyk-Szwec (2010, p.56) for Knud Illeris, it must: be subjectively important to the

individual's cognitive, emotional and social development and be part of a coherent process. In addition, the learner should be involved in the interaction with the social and / or material environment, and the impact of the environment must set an example. It is also important that the experience requires a social context.

Experiencing the situation causes data assimilation. And this causes not only an increase in the amount of individual elements that are constituents of the social world, but also causes a development of the system of assimilation (e.g.: „learning dispositions”, „cognitive structure”, „systems of emotional orientation”, „creation of habitus” or „reference systems structures making connection with the others and the world”) (Altheit, 2002, p.70), so that life experiences provide certain patterns of learning.

Finally it is worth noting, that the knowledge based on previous experience, though usually unconscious, is always the „background” to solving all the problems encountered in life. Particularly difficult situations can, at least theoretically, be recovered for use in the present. Reflective processes emerging in may this way be regarded as self-study moments. They are the basis for the organization of an individual's learning processes, so that we can talk about biographical character of all educational processes.

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BIOGRAPHY IN ADULT EDUCATION – DIDACTICS AND RESEARCH PRACTICE

When following the current work of humanities scholars, one can notice what can be termed a „biographical turn” (Bron, 2009). The biographical research constitutes a link between history, where identity is entirely connected with biography and research on biography, and such branches of social sciences and humanities as literary studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology, pedagogics, and andragogics. One can notice an increased interest in inter- and trans-disciplinary dialogue in biographical research (c.f. Golonka-Legut, 2014).

This tendency, particularly prominent in andragogy, consists in the scholars focusing on individuals’ biographies and biographical research, and constantly defining new paths of thinking and working. That is why, both on the level of theoretical reflection and research, and educational practice (didactics of adult education), andragogues increasingly often refer to the role of biography in (re)cognising and understanding the process of how individuals learn and how they function during the course of their lives. Reflection on individual life experience allows one to learn on the basis of one’s personal experience (learning from one’s biography) or the biographies of others (learning from the biographies of others), and to realise who one is and who one may become (Dubas, & Świtalski, 2011a; Dubas, & Świtalski, 2011b; Dominicè, 2006).

In reality, biography, i.e., individual life experience, is perceived as a cognitive source in defining and understanding the process of lifelong learning, the process of biographical learning, and the process of intergenerational learning. Biography can be a source of educational activity and teaching strategies for adult learners (alternative methods or techniques of teaching).

INDIVIDUALS AS BIOGRAPHICAL ENTITIES

Taking account of the educational potential of life experience and the potential of self-development within the course of one’s life constitutes a course of reflection on the opportunity to employ biography/biographical experience in the process of (re) cognition and understanding the learning process. As a result, an individual is an entity which learns, and learning is a natural life process that is integrally connected

with other everyday life activities (Rogers, 2003, pp. 9-10, in: Malewski, 2006, p. 30). In this approach an individual is understood as a subject, a biographical entity, who is „defined“ by his or her biography, which includes individual experience which is, however, also recounted and explained from the perspective of meanings defined by the society and the culture in which one lives (Dubas, 2009, p. 41).

This implies that the elements which comprise the relationship between an individual and the world are: individual life experience, critical events, educational experience, biographical reflection, emotions, thoughts, role-models, significant places, „objects“, experiencing (cf. Golonka-Legut, 2014). At the same time, it should be emphasised that it is not necessary for all facts of an individual's biography to be defined (evaluated) from the perspective of their importance and value. Martine Lani-Bayle points out that „an event is that which comes more or less unexpectedly. Nevertheless, not everything which happens influences us, not everything constitutes an event for us and for others, for the world. An event destabilises; it determines the „before“ and the „after“ (Lani-Bayle, 2011, p. 26). In relation to the ideas of this author, one can notice that educational potential is not an integral element of individual experience. As a result, one can discern typical (simple) individual experiences, i.e., events, and educational events, which are called educational experiences.

For andragogues such a stance is connected with the questions: What conditions need to be met for an individual life experience to become an educational one? What categories of individual life experiences create lifelong learning? How can individual life experiences be used in education? (cf. Golonka-Legut, 2014).

Researchers attempt to find answers to the above problems in theoretical reflections, research practice, and educational practice in its broad understanding.

UNDERSTANDING BIOGRAPHY IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Within the andragogical tradition one can observe two major currents of working with biographies. They are: 1 – analysis of the trajectory of life history, the entirety of individual stories; 2 – analysis of the elements of biography which are considered relevant from the point of view of the problems discussed. Therefore, biography is understood as a process and/or individual experience:

- Biography as a process: life course, life cycle, life path
- Biography as an individual experience (knowledge, achievement, information, events)

One should bear in mind that individual experiences are the points which define the course of the trajectory.

According to Norman K. Denzin, biographical studies in research practice can take one of three forms: „1 – studying narrative of a single life history; 2 – collecting life histories related to certain common subjects; 3 – comparative analysis of life histories carried out to develop a grounded theory“ (Denzin, 1986, in: Denzin, 1990, p. 67).

The specificity of biographical didactics lies in an active inclusion and use of individual life experience (i.e. biographical experience) in educational practice in its

broad understanding (cf. Golonka, 2012, pp. 45 – 62). From this perspective, the source and the area of learning is formed by recollections of personal and global events. They may be related to: 1 – memory of certain periods in life, defined by precise time frames (e.g. childhood memories), 2 – memories of general events – related to the experiences and episodes in the life of an individual which have a specific character (e.g. memories of celebrations), 3 – memories of specific events – pertaining to the knowledge of some specific events, which takes the form of projections and sensations (Conway, 1995). One should also bear in mind that the following elements play a crucial role in the forming of memories: the culture in which an individual functions, interpersonal relations, events, the way in which an individual understands one's life, psychological well-being, satisfaction with life and the feeling of self-worth, the practice of recollection (Niedźwieńska, 2009, p. 117-124).

In order for biography to be properly employed in research and educational practice, it is necessary to precisely define this term. On the basis of the etymology of the word „biography” it can be clearly concluded that it denotes a „description of life” (Greek: *bios* – life, way of life, *grapho* – I write/*logos*), i.e., a text as well as real life (Trzcionkowski, 2005, p. 12). Therefore, there is a popular understanding of biography as a retrospective description of facts from the life of a well-known person. Nevertheless, such definition imposes certain limits. The andragogical definition of biography is much broader.

In biographical research, „biography” is usually understood as „a virtual construct arranging the personal experience of an individual, who searches for the meaning of the events which they have experienced” (Dubas, 2009, p.110). Theodor Shulze has enumerated several such perspectives of research: biography as a text, written either by the subject of the biography (autobiography) or by another person (writing someone else's biography); as life – *BIOS*; as the forming process of a person; as a social structure – the idea of a „normal” biography, typical of certain social layers, cultural work groups, as a form of communication (Schultze, 1999, pp. 39-40, in: Urbaniak-Zajac, 2011, p. 6).

N. K. Denzin, in turn, defines the following aspects as part of research practice: life history, life story, case history, case study, and self story. According to this author, life history presents the experiences of a single individual, group, or social organisation in the way in which this individual, group, or organisation interprets a certain set of experiences. Case history focuses on a certain process in a life. Case study is an analysis of a single case conducted in order to develop a theory. Life story focuses on a life – or a part of it – as related by an individual; the account is subsequently interpreted by a researcher. Self story is an individual's account of his/her own life, presented in the context of a set of experiences which the individual shares (or not) with other people (Denzin, 1990, p. 68).

It needs to be emphasised that even though biographical experiences are rooted in the past, biography combines all three time perspectives: the past, the present, and the future.

The past is included in this approach because an individual provides an account of what happened in his/her life at a particular moment, and also because the past is described from the perspective of the present. Sometimes this collision of time perspectives might make it difficult for narrators to attribute meanings to their own experiences, which, in turn, hinders research, or even the very process of individual learning. If that is the case, the researchers/educators are responsible for drawing the narrators' attention to the time perspective (e.g. they may ask the participants of research/classes to try to remember how they felt in that particular situation, how

they felt at the time when they were actually experiencing the particular event, rather than describe how they feel about it presently). As a result, one must remember to differentiate between „learning from experience”, i.e., learning throughout one’s life, and „biographical learning”, i.e., learning from recalled experiences (Dubas, 2011).

The perspective of the future is more debatable. It presents itself when the participants during research discuss their plans, dreams, and aims. Nevertheless, we can also talk about a state which can be described as „submerging in the future”. It is a situation which is related to those experiences that pertain to one’s life in the present, and whose future course lies not only in the realm of plans, but is a natural potential consequence of present activities or the present state (e.g. reflection on the future education of a fourth-semester student or the reflections on „becoming a mother” of an eight-months-pregnant woman).

Yet another question which that is crucial in biographical research is the fact that researchers are not interested in the facts themselves; the focus is on interpretations of the facts as well as experiences connected with them. This approach differentiates biography from a curriculum vitae. It is also helpful in comprehending the subjectivity of biography. Even if two individuals, describing the same event, present stories which appear quite contradictory, it does not mean that one of them is lying to the researcher. It is this subjective perspective which is essential for the authenticity of a biography.

For a researcher, a biography is not necessarily the story of the life of a well-known person. Outstanding individuals constitute a specific group, and they lie within the realm of the interests of researchers only when they study an elite approach to creativity or exceptional talent. However, scholars of andragogy, psychology, sociology are typically interested in the stories of „ordinary people”: people who have experienced a specific event, who have lived in interesting socio-cultural environments, who have experienced an interesting developmental or educational period (cf. Skibińska, 2006). Studies of thematic biographies or biographies focusing on stages of life are particularly popular in adult education, researchers also increasingly often carry out projects in which complete biographies (pertaining to the entire life of a narrator) are the main source of data.

The element which is common to both the popular and the scientific understanding of biography is that typically it is expected of a narrated/recorded story to be authentic. It is a defining feature of a biography.

In practice, researchers and narrators (research subjects) enter into the so-called „autobiographical pact”, which is „a commitment which authors make to tell the stories of their lives (or certain parts or aspects of them) directly and truthfully. (...) The autobiographers promise you that what they are about to narrate is true, at least as far as it is what they believe to be true. They act as historians, as journalists, with the only difference being that the subjects who make the promise pertaining to the truthfulness of the information provided are themselves the authors” (Lejeun, 2007, p. 297).

If the research participants are anonymous, it is unlikely that they should experience any negative consequences if they choose not to be truthful; however, it is also assumed that due to their anonymity they will not deem it necessary to lie. Philippe Lejeun states that „(...) an autobiographical text can be verified (even if this is in practice difficult to do)” (Lejeun, 2007, p. 297).

Furthermore, one should also bear in mind that the main aim of the researcher is to follow experience and the way in which the research subjects think, to find and to decode the meanings which they attribute to their own experiences, and, as a result, to

analyse the collected data in order to increase the knowledge about the world which is experienced in many diverse ways, rather than to pass judgement on the „soul” of the authors of the biographies, or to carry out a certain investigation aimed at verifying the content of the autobiographical texts (cf. Rodak, 2005, p. 119). As a result, all that the research participants say ought to be interpreted. The only exceptions are those stories or fragments of stories that cannot be considered of scientific relevance, or of cognitive value (e.g. a researcher on the basis of his/her knowledge, intuition, and experience discovers obvious lies, manipulations of data).

BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In the context of the foregoing reflections, the difference between biography and autobiography should be considered.

The fundamental difference (in the popular understanding of the terms) lies in the relationship between authors and characters. As a result, the story written by a narrator who is not, at the same time, the main character of the story is considered biography. In turn, a life history written by the main character of a biography constitutes an autobiography.

The difference between the two terms is interestingly presented in the aforementioned book by P. Lejeun (2007, p. 60). The difference is defined therein, as follows:

- Biography: the Author is or is not the Narrator; the Main Character resembles the Model¹
- Autobiography: for the Main Character the Narrator is that which the Author is for the Model (Lejeun 2007, s. 60).

In scientific practice, as Ewa Skibińska notes, „the notion of autobiography, essential in research proceedings, still remains a subject of debate among scholars of social sciences. It appears that this debate is based on the positivist and the antipositivist models of science. Two options are formed, in the first of which autobiography is perceived as an objective entity, which is reflected in the use of the term „biography”, and in the other it is perceived as a subjective entity, and as such it is termed „autobiography” (Skibińska, 2006, p. 330). In contemporary research one may, in fact, note three strands in conducted research: biographical approach, autobiographical approach, and auto/biographical research (Miller, 2003).

From the cognitive perspective it is interesting that when we consider biographical research material on the one hand, we have the autobiographies of research participants, and on the other there is the researcher who initiates, describes, and interprets the stories. Occasionally, researchers work with biographical material written down by other people. Sometimes that narrator talks about significant people, and we have a biography present within the autobiography. How to deal with this diversity? It is a good solution to use the term „auto/biographical research” when the researchers also employs their own biographies (Jakubowska, 2001).

¹ The author defines a Model as „the reality which the story is intended to resemble” (Lejeun, 2007, p. 48)

Consequently, all other forms of research can be considered from the biographical perspective, which can be specifically biographical or autobiographical.

BIOGRAPHY IN RESEARCH PRACTICE – SELECTED TECHNIQUES OF COLLECTING AND COMPILING RESEARCH MATERIAL

In the humanities research, where the biographical approach is typically considered from the qualitative perspective, the following techniques are practical in collecting and interpreting research material:

- Narrative interview;
- Biographical interview, with elements of biographical materials;
- Biographical workshops;
- Content analysis (autobiographical essay, analysis of diaries and blogs).

The feature that differentiates the narrative interview from other research techniques is the fact that it consists of an extensive narrative, constituting as answer to a single question from a researcher. The researchers encourage the research participants to recount a story pertaining to a particular period or a stage in their lives, or an important event, and they wait for the participants to finish their stories. The narratives cannot be interrupted and their course cannot be changed. It is only when a research participant has finished telling the story that a researcher can ask further questions, in order to clarify or develop some interesting aspects (Alheit, 2002; Urbaniak – Zajac, 1999). As Mirosława Nowak-Dziemianowicz points out, what is characteristic of such research is that it is the research participants who speak most of the time; interruption by the researcher is minimal; life history is treated as a phenomenon; the researcher's aim is to understand the history (Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2002, p. 62).

In a synthetic description of this technique, the following stages can be defined:

1. Preparation of the interview: invitation to participate in the research, receiving permission to participate in the research and to record the conversation, creating atmosphere
2. The researcher asks one open-ended question: e.g. tell me about your life / tell me about your childhood / tell me about your motherhood/ tell me about your wedding day...
3. The research participant develops a narrative (a story)
4. The researcher asks supplementary questions
5. Transcription (writing down the recording)
6. Analysis and interpretation

This form of interview is especially practical when a researcher aims to collect information about a certain fragment of the life of an individual, or when the intention is to see the trajectory of coping with a specific situation. Such a situation or event needs to be firmly rooted in the life history of a research participant, so that it can become

the source of reflections that the participant can share. Furthermore, it is expected of a research participant to have certain narrative experience. If that is not the case, the participant may have certain problems in fluent and independent telling of the story. As a result, a situation may arise when such an individual will wait for further, precise questions – then the interview will resort to a qualitative in-depth interview.

Biographical interview is yet another technique. The process is similar to the narrative interview. Instead of the main question, the researcher prepares a list of questions – topic areas (interview guidebook) e.g. An interview concerned with family traditions.

The questions:

1. Which festivals did you and your family celebrate? Which of them were particularly important?
2. How did the family prepare for these festivals?
3. How did you participate in the preparations?
4. Which traditions do you uphold? In what way? Why?

Biographical interview is a typical qualitative interview, which is conducted in order to obtain answers to precise research questions. Nevertheless, all the formulated questions pertain to a particular main problem. This type of interview differs from the one discussed previously, in that it is conducted on the basis of an interview guidebook, which includes a list of research problems. That is why such an interview does not necessarily call for very experienced researchers. However, certain flexibility is required of researchers, which means that the number and the sequence of the areas and the questions are not unalterable.

Content analysis, in turn, is a technique where a researcher does not interfere with the course of the story at all. In this technique materials that are ready for analysis are typically used, e.g., memoirs, diaries, photos, as well as internet blogs.

In his synthesis of the research procedure in this technique, Jacek Gulanowski (2014) defined the following stages:

1. The gathering and preparation of data for research;
2. The setting of the units of analysis;
3. The development of categories (names, definitions, scopes);
4. Initial coding and verification of the categories;
5. The final research of the text;
6. Discussion and interpretation of the results.

The author presents a general procedure which can be employed in the qualitative and the quantitative approach. It should be noted that in the case of autobiographical research, i.e., qualitative research, the categories are formed during the research rather than before it, and the categories need not be separate. The categories ought to be carefully formulated, because if they are too precise they will lead to „labelling“, which is contrary to the qualitative approach.

Biographical material can be collected with the aid of research techniques, as well as during the educational process. Autobiographical workshops are a form of classes which provide such an opportunity.

BIOGRAPHY IN THE DIDACTICS OF ADULT EDUCATION

The educational potential of biography has also been noted by practising andragogues. Contemporarily, the opportunity to employ biography in adult education, in the broad understanding of the term, continually inspires researchers and it has secured a place in andragogical practice. In this perspective biography is seen from the point of view of its educational function. Furthermore, autobiographical reflection plays a crucial role in the learning process. This is a reflection on the process of one's own educational process, or it is considered learning from biography. Individuals (biographical subjects) explore the labyrinths of their own lives, where they experience free associations of ideas, facts, and events; they look at their own experiences and concentrate on those which they might have previously found unimportant; discover relations and interdependencies between certain events and situations and kindle their desire to reconstruct independently their own past (Demetrio, 2000, p. 143).

In andragogical practice, when reflecting on the importance of their own experiences (from the perspective of life history) adults:

- recognise (define) themselves as social units
- attach importance to their experiences
- begin to understand the importance of their lives and the major social factors that influence them
- are able to consciously and intentionally share their knowledge with others
- recognise the importance (role) of their own experiences in the learning process and in the intergenerational transfer

When looking for areas in which individual life experience can be used in educational practice (adult education), one should consider two areas of the so-called biographical didactics². They are:

- Workshops: biographical workshops
- Seminars (related to biography, autobiographical memory)

A form often used in biographical didactics is biographical workshops. It is treated as „a form of didactics which promotes active living and creativity, and in which the participants are perceived as individuals who have their own life experiences and unique knowledge which anyone may share in order to allow others to benefit from it” (Czerniawska, 2007, p. 99). Taking into account the complex process of organising these forms of classes, the following stages of autobiographical workshops can be defined:

- 1) Preparation: choosing the topic, preparing teaching materials, preparing the didactic space
- 2) The contract – establishing the rules governing the classes (one class, the entire course) together
- 3) The integration (getting to know each other, ice-breaking)

² This problem is discussed in detail in Joanna Golonka-Legut's „Indywidualne doświadczenie życiowe obszarem uczenia się człowieka dorosłego” [Individual life experience as the area of learning of an adult] (Golonka-Legut, 2012, pp. 45-62).

- 4) The workshops – autobiographical games, working with biographical materials (letters, photos), discussion, a mini-lecture
- 5) Relaxing exercise (during the class or afterwards)
- 6) Summary, evaluation

Biographical seminars are also a popular form of biographical classes. As part of such seminars, adult participants create educational biographies. This provides them with an opportunity „to reflect on their own experiences in order to interpret them and learn more of their own individual and unique learning processes” (Dominicé, 2006, p. 12). A seminar proposed by P. Dominicé, consisting of the stages listed below, may serve as an example of the use of educational biography in adult education.

- Providing information about the seminar – drawing attention to the subject matter (biography) and voluntary participation
- Deciding the number of participants in a seminar group and the class duration (e.g. 12 people, classes once in two weeks for one semester)
- Introduction of the seminar – the theoretical basis of educational biography, biographical research, introduction to the reference books
- Forming small groups:
 - A written contract – discussion of the group work (drawing attention to privacy issues and mutual respect);
 - Choosing the problem to be analysed from the perspective of a biographical narrative provided by each member of a particular group (e.g. family traditions);
 - Preparing the biographical narratives (oral or written) of each participant;
 - Presentation of the narratives. Sharing experiences. Reflection. Discussion;
 - Analysis of the prepared narratives from the perspective of the chosen topic;
 - Summary. Discussion of the process. Evaluation. Final reflection.

However, one should take into account that in practice the selection of contents for education may be problematic. The problems include: difficulties connected with the functioning of autobiographical memory, difficulties related to the development of effective methods of triggering autobiographical memory, difficulties resulting from crossing the boundaries of privacy, and each participants’ individual approach to the subject of the classes (Skibińska, 2009, p. 61).

One of the examples of so-called good practice in the use of bibliography in formal education was the „Meetings in space and time – intergenerational dialogue” project carried out in 2008-2009 at the University of the Third Age of the University of Wrocław as part of the „Seniors in action” organised by the Towarzystwo Inicjatyw Twórczych „ę” and funded by the Polish-American Freedom Foundation³.

³ The course of the project is discussed in „Spotkanie w czasoprzestrzeni – dialog między generacjami....” [Meetings in space and time – intergenerational dialogue] by Joanna Golonka-Legut

The participants of the project were students of the Institute of Pedagogy of the University of Wrocław and senior residents of Wrocław who attended periodically organised biographical workshops to share their biographical experiences.

The idea of the project was:

- Improving the relationships between the U3A students and the students of pedagogics
- Changing opinions about seniors (presenting seniors' life wisdom)
- Promoting active living among the seniors and encouraging them to engage in the process of lifelong learning

During the workshops active working methods and techniques were used, including the autobiographical game „A game with life in the background” developed by Duccio Demetrio, and photos from family albums and personal souvenirs of the participants. The following topics were discussed, among others:

- A network of memories (returning to a number of different kinds of memories: i.e. the earliest memories – first love, first friendship)
- Childhood memories – the most beautiful children's stories, children's games
- Among photos – biographical workshops with the use of photos from the family albums of the participants
- My favourite places – memories of places
- Portrait of a significant other

However, the research first and foremost led to the establishment of lasting intergenerational relationships – the participants still see each other; improving cooperation and establishing positive contacts between seniors and students; creating a film (summing up the project) shot in Prague, and „The biography archive” – a photo exhibition. Moreover, a number of people made the effort to create family trees, started writing their own biographies, decided to record family histories in different ways – in stories, letters to their grandchildren, and poems.

SUMMARY

The above reflections present selected perspectives in considering and understanding biography in andragogy, while at the same time pointing to their cognitive value and relevance in the contemporary discourse on the process of human learning. An important element of this discussion is the fact that the role of biography in educational and research practice has been noted, which, in turn, allows it to be extensively employed. It also needs to be noted that a dialogue between biographical research and didactics is feasible, which means that the material collected during workshops can be treated as reliable research material, provided that standards and ethics of scientific research are maintained.

Regardless of which perspective of using biography in their work researchers choose, it may be suggested that on each occasion their research and/or didactic work will be innovative, creative, and inspiring.

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BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT IN TEACHING THE STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE - POTENTIAL AND RISKS

PREFACE

In the emerging information society, organizational action of an educational character has gained significant value. Social groups, whose task is to organize time and space for the benefit of others, can pursue this task in many different ways. Groups which should be naturally associated with the afore-mentioned initiatives are lecturers, teachers, tutors, coaches, leaders or volunteers, whom the author defines, for the purpose of this text, as educators.

Geometrical technological progress (Jorgensen, Vu in: Castells, Cardoso 2005, p. 71-124) connected with the liquid state of the current culture (Bauman 2006), gives the afore-mentioned educators enormous flexibility in shaping their activities. This freedom may manifest itself through the free choice of methods, techniques and research tools, bearing in mind that they are intended to serve a specific purpose.

However, in order to achieve the anticipated results, it is necessary to know and control the advantages and disadvantages of one's own workshop techniques. It is reasonable to argue that there is no perfect tool for the implementation of all educational goals - this thesis is partly confirmed by the variety of tools, as well as the fact that the people who use them are also individuals. Educators who have their own ideas and experience to draw on are able, in very different ways, to use the potential and the power of the tools available to them. It can therefore be argued that any educator, even if he / she uses the same methods, techniques and tools as others, will realize their potential in a unique way. This text is therefore an important geragogical reflection and a subjective argument for the evaluation of the relevant subject.

BIOGRAPHY AS A TEACHING METHOD

It is worth mentioning at the outset of this section that the outlined definition of biography, as a method of teaching, is only one of the possible interpretations of the entire research issue. The author consciously limits the meaning of the definition to the biographical method that has been used in his work with the elderly, in order not to create a false picture of the activities which took place. This could be possible because biography is a broad teaching and research tool, which takes into account a wide spectrum of possibilities and forms of activity. A full description, including the

paradigmatical, methodological, technical, and utilitlial variations, can be found in the work of Joanna Golonka-Legut (Golonka-Legut in: Jakubowski 2012, p. 45-62).

The word „biography” is a combination of the two concepts of „bio” and „graphy”. The first concept refers to the Latin word *bio*, meaning something biological and living (Bańkowski 2005, p. 117). The second one derives from the word *graphy*, which refers to a word, directly relating to its semantic relationship with writing, illustration, description or literature (Bańkowski 2005, p. 338). When we combine these two we get one word - biography, whose definition may have the following meanings: a description of person's life; a description of a person's activities; a description of an outstanding or successful person; a CV. Biography, therefore, is a description of the life of an entity, a living creature - in the general understanding it is a human being.

Like the notion of biography, the meaning of the concept - teaching methods - is also complex. The term „method” in the simplest and most synthetic terms, is a way of doing something, and answers the question „how to do something in order to achieve the goal?” (Niemierko 2008, p. 202). In contrast teaching, in the broadest definitional sense, is the general theory of educational activities, and in the narrowest sense it is a technical learning process (Niemierko 2008, p. 11). For the purposes of this text, the author adopts the narrower range of meaning of the concept of „teaching”. This is due to the fact that as a professional educator pursuing the objectives of education, activities are seen as a series of related teaching units, which together form a coherent whole (process technology). In addition, individuals who „pass” a series of educational processes devised by the author, are seen as individual potentials, whose initial state is subject to change after completing the entire aducational process.

When we corelate the individual meanings of the terms and concepts, we get the following complete definition of a „teaching method”: it is one of a number of ways of achieving specific goals, in the process of technological learning. Biography, then, will be one of the ways of implementating specific objectives in the education process, using the description of selected human lifes.

It can be argued that biography has been used as a teaching tool since the time of the ancient civilizations of Europe and the Middle East. On the basis of sacred texts, the Jews communicated significant content through the prisms of the lives of Moses, Abraham and King David. The Greeks recalled the figures of Socrates or Alexander the Great. In turn, the Romans passed on the stories of Romulus and Remus.

The biographical method may therefore have a very long history, and not without reason it is still used to this day. To provide the recipients with some important content, every educator should reckon with the fact that not all the content which he gives will be equally successfully adopted. In particular, this applies to such content which directly interfere with the axio-normative system of the individuals. Attempting to redefine the standards or make them more relative may be impossible, if the educator does not have enough authority over the recipients. It is therefore extremely useful to provide certain content through the prism of the appropriate form, which is important (significant) for the recipients and in consequence makes the content more reliable, and therefore convincing. Sometimes, it is not even necessary, on the part of the recipients, to have detailed knowledge of the character, because the high level of social recognition of the character makes this condition superfluous. Very important is also the awareness, on the part of the recipients, that their own character is not exposed to public analysis. This is because the significant figure should be the focus of attention. This seems to make the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of the recipients a lot easier. Partial confirmation

can be found in the tests which have been conducted on the basis of the five-factor model of personality of Paul T. Costa Jr. and Robert R. McCrae (1992).

We can see elements of this mechanism both in the media (celebrities or politicians supporting the idea of social equality), the academic world (a famous professor postulating a controversial thesis) or the family (using the authority of the parents in relation to the child), but these elements are mostly seen in the structures of formal education. This can best be done by analysing the school curriculum, whose activities are largely based on the analysis and understanding of the events and characters from the past. Examples of such school subjects are: history, civic studies, languages or physics.

One question remains open, whether this method can and should be used in working with older people, and specifically students of the Universities of the Third Age (UTA). To answer this question, it is necessary to characterize the profile of the elderly and then describe a typical student of the UTA. This will make the rest of the analysis more transparent, and will recreate the specific space for educational activities. UTA is in this case unique regarding the social group which forms the core of this institution, as well as the constitutive goal which motivates its activity.

PROFILE OF PEOPLE IN LATE ADULTHOOD

One of the most complete descriptions of late adulthood was provided by Helen Bee (Bee 2004). The description proposed by this author can be divided into three main sections: biological, psychological and social. Information contained therein can be summarised to describe people in their late adulthood, which may be regarded as typical but nevertheless in no way an arbitrary description which applies to the entire elderly population.

People in late adulthood are characterized above all by visible and invisible physical changes, among which are: the regressive physical changes in the brain (Bee 2004, p. 547), regressive changes in the senses (Ibid, pp. 548-551), and regressive changes in mobility (Ibid, p. 552).

These physical changes are complemented by reduced social activity and a change in mental processes. Theoretically, these qualities constitute a negative prognosis for people in late adulthood, although, as stated by H. Bee, they do not take into account the great diversity and individuality in people undergoing the aging process.

From the teaching perspective, awareness of the capabilities and limitations of people in late adulthood is critical in the planning of the educational process. Knowledge of the recipients of the educational process determines the choice of methods, techniques and tools in such a way as to best exploit the potential of the recipients. When favourable conditions for education are created, they create an efficient transfer system which facilitates the effective exchange of information.

The intellectual capacity of older people to learn depends largely on the mental stimulus they receive, either from specialised institutions (UTA), or from themselves. Due to biological changes, it is obvious that the speed of comprehension and assimilation of new content is lower than with those in early or middle adulthood. Also important is also the amount of material transferred, its complexity, attractiveness of content (which may be interesting or boring) and environment. Ultimately, results in the mastery or understanding of material may be the same for various age groups, but people in late adulthood, by their own limitations, need to repeat the material to effectively consolidate new knowledge.

Even more problematic is the effectiveness of the teaching methods which are used by educators to carry out certain tasks, especially when working with people who are in late adulthood. This is due to the lack of comparative studies in this field, particularly against the background of Polish society. In the opinion of the author, current reflection on the methodology of teaching is based largely on tradition, speculation, logical reasoning or the experience of individual educators, instead of objective knowledge, thus preventing us from standardising a quantitative measure of the performance of each method used in the transfer of content. One of the possible reasons is proposed by Luba Jakubowska, who points out the difficulties and barriers of an organisational and substantive nature, which researchers must overcome in order to collect fully reliable data from seniors (Jakubowska in: Kobylarek, 2012: p 27-35).

CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

The University of the Third Age, according to Andrew Klimczuk, can be classified as an education base in the non-formal sector (Klimczuk for: Dabrowski 2013). UTA activity is focused essentially on the following functions: education, compensation, revalidation, re-adaptation, assimilation and re-socialization of the individuals of a specific biological and social age, so they can adapt to the surrounding socio-cultural changes easier, faster and more efficiently. The nature of the UTA is typified by the following features:

- a. Voluntary: continuing education in the UTA is not obligatory;
- b. Open: Anyone over 55 years old can apply;
- c. Flexible: UTA activity is channelled towards the realisation of not one but many diverse and multidimensional tasks which permit a variety of thematic classes, workshops, seminars, lectures, etc.

It may therefore be assumed that „specific” profiles apply to this institution – individual students naturally have certain characteristics which distinguish them from people aged in late adulthood as a whole. A comprehensive profile of a UTA student has been proposed by Sophia Hasińska, Iwona Janiak-Rejno and Ewa Tracz, who indicate the following qualities (Hasińska, Janiak - Rejno, Tarcza in: Gulanowski 2012, p. 22-29):

- Cognitive activity (assimilation of new knowledge, information);
- Social activity (meeting new people, maintaining a network of contacts, focused on others);
- Consciously oriented activity (time management, maintaining or developing their own physical and mental activities);

The motivation of this social group to learn is also specific. Social change, in the form of withdrawal from public life, creates a state in which seniors have two resources which people in the productive age lack: time and unused energy. The second of these qualities is very important, in that a person freed from cultural and social pressure does not have to channel his/her potential specifically to participating in the economic

struggle. They may, however, voluntarily direct their own resources towards the implementation of their goals, generally with more enthusiasm, patience and distance in the face of difficulties. Summarising, UTA students constitute a particular group among the population of people in late adulthood as a whole. They are distinguished by such characteristics as: curiosity about the world and people, motivation to increase knowledge and contacts, the desire to maintain good health and rights, and the need to give some sense to their own existence. This means that as a social group they are not representative of people aged of 55 plus as a whole, and therefore the observations, conclusions and theses resulting from work with students from the UTA, are applicable only to this group.

THE ANALYSIS OF DISCURSIVE CIRCLE „WINDOW”

The authors of the Discursive Circle „WINDOW” are Anna Sokołowska, a student of the University of the Third Age at Wrocław University, and the author of this text. The initiative was aimed at seniors who are students of the University of the Third Age. The main aim was to communicate content relating to the social sciences and humanities, in order to stimulate the students of the UTA to wider reflection and critical creativity regarding contemporary social and cultural issues, including such topics as : tradition, fashion, culture, society, myths, stereotypes, rituals, religion, beliefs, values, love, forgiveness, sexuality, gender, feminism, social work, engineering and technology, art, science, history, symbolic violence, political discourses, family, needs, age, work. During this process, the biographies of several significant people were used, including: Paul Coeho (writer), Jan Władysław Dawid (scientist), Bolesław Drobner (politician), Eugene Geppert (artist), Jerzy Grotowski (theater studies), Martin Heidegger (philosopher), Louis Hirsztfeld (doctor), Horace (poet), Bolesław Fireplace Kominek (priest), Stanisław Kulczyński (politician), Ludwig van Beethoven (musician, composer), Joseph Miniewski (soldier), Ignatius Padarewski (muse, composer), Plato (philosopher) Wanda Rutkiewicz (mountaineer), Jean Paul Sartre (writer, philosopher), Socrates (philosopher), Edith Stein (philosopher). The Circle held about forty meetings during its three-year period of activity, attracting an average of 25 students (sometimes rising to 40), and ended officially in May 2014.

MAIN PROBLEMS

The main problem, which for the most part is a paraphrase of the research topic, but in question form, is as follows: What are the potentials and risks generated by using the biographical method in working with students from the UTA?

In this context, there are various research issues arising from the main subjects under analysis - biography and teaching. These are: Can biography be used as a method of teaching students of the UTA at the University of Wrocław? What are the positive and negative phenomena generated by using biography as a method of teaching in work with students of UTA at the University of Wrocław? Do the personal biographies of the student of the UTA interfere with the reception of the content transferred by the biographical method?

METHOD, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers used a series of methods, techniques and teaching tools to transfer content, including : discussions, talks, lectures, seminars, presentations, drama group work, and debates. Biographical teaching complemented or supplemented the above.

In the author's opinion, however, biography became a focal point of self-teaching methods, due to its specific qualities. Arguments in support of this are as follows:

- The transfer of content from the perspective of important social and cultural figures was standardized, and took place within the context of the biography against the background of a particular period and its issues;
- The transfer of content had strict, rigid structures, including: characteristics of form, characteristics of the problem, open discussion moderated by the teachers, and a summary made of disputes and topics;
- The transfer of the contents was conducted under similar conditions, including the size of the recipient group and the duration in transferring content;
- The adopted convention has been tested and fine-tuned in consultation with the participants, throughout the three years the Discursive Circle WINDOW was active;

This assessment of the effectiveness of the method, based on the biographies of significant people, is a summary of the author's active observations over three years. After each lesson the researcher made a personal note regarding the effectiveness of teaching media. Notes were prepared after discussion with both the co-host and the UTA students, who often volunteered their own valuable evaluation, indicating the advantages and disadvantages of the method. These are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Biographical Method	
Disadvantages	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulties in shifting the focus from the significant issue of concern to the person; - Difficulties in differentiating the person from the subject under discussion; - The students' lack of knowledge of the biographical characters necessitates over-simplification and speculation; - Use of the biographical method requires expertise in conducting meaningful form against a socio-cultural and historical background; - The form and issue of concern comprise too large a field for discussion resulting in the need for moderation; - The participants' own biographies may be a significant factor in preventing the collection analysis, and interpretation of any content; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The personification of the problem or the phenomenon; - Outlining the historical, social and cultural context of the significant person; - Redefinition of the historical role of the significant person; - Involving crypto-biography of the participants (analysis of issues through comparison of own and significant peoples' biographies); - Access to a huge resource of significant people, which can be selected according to geographical, historical, ethnic, political, social, cultural, etc. criteria;

Note. Author.

The last „disadvantage” in the table above needs some explanation. Some UTA students may resist, or „block”, reception of educational content transmitted using the biographical method, and this may occur in the following situations:

- Antipathy of the listener to the significant person;
- Rejection of content transferred through the prism of a significant person;
- Lack of clarity of content transferred through the prism of a significant person;
- Conflict between the biographies of the student and significant person;

The author’s own interpretation is that this mechanism of blocking educational content, when using a significant person’s biography, is apparently due to the fact that some students make a better critical assessment of the significant person than that imposed on them. In other words, students of the UTA consider themselves better at assessing, analysing and interpreting certain phenomena, processes or issues. And when they do so, they distance themselves from their own person. That gives them some kind of sense of security. A significant role may also be played by a subconscious mechanism called the confirmation error, which affects the filtering of the educational content transferred at that precise moment (http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Efekt_potwierdzenia).

If, however, students who are influenced by the biography of a significant person, make a critical analysis of their own biography, it would mean that the role of this course is to provide the basis for a review of one’s own experiences, ideas, values, norms, ethics, and aesthetics. Such action, although justified from the perspective of the scientific attitude of scepticism in the case of people in other social groups, from their own perspective may, however, be undesirable. The ability to direct self-reflection onto the significant person guarantees anonymity and security. In addition, it is an excellent way for educators to reassure recipients of the educational process, because it removes the need for social exhibitionism, which often involves ones intellectual and emotional resources.

A person’s biography, which is the sum of experiences, memories and identity, is the cumulative achievement of each individual, and is a life-long process. However, a close relationship between this baggage and personality makes the first one both a source of development potential as well as a blocking factor to further development and progress. Intellectual habits, which also include certain stereotypes of thinking, cause some issues to be identified automatically and misinterpreted. Going beyond those misinterpretations can only be achieved by a process of relativization of ones norms and values.

SUMMARY

The fore-going analysis can provide answers to research questions and problems. In order to maintain a clear structure of the inferences, the author adopted the following question-and-answer structure :

Question 1. Can biography be used as a method of teaching students of UTA at the University of Wrocław?

Answer: In light of the current literature and the author’s personal observations, the biographical method has a specific set of advantages, which makes it a valuable, and

sometimes the only, successful means of communication and transfer of educational content. Its effectiveness largely depends on : the educator who uses this method; the content which needs to be transferred; the target group of recipients.

Question 2. What are the positive and negative phenomena generated using biography as a method of teaching students of the UTA at the University of Wrocław?

Answer: Among the positive developments which the biographical method generates are the following: providing a human factor to the issues; positive redefinition of the role of the individual in history; historical biography subconsciously leads students to analyse their own biographies; the biographical method gives the opportunity to connect micro- and macro- level of analysis, making the issue of the discussion much more interesting; biographical method provides an opportunity to link the past, present and future, which enables us to discern historical, social and cultural patterns;

Negative effects include: difficulties in separating the main issue of discussion from the the profile of the significant person, major difficulties in handling the biographical method efficiently, and the necessity for moderating analysis and discussion within the borders of the problematic issues.

Question 3. Do the personal biographies of students of the UTA in University of Wrocław interact with the reception of content transferred by the biographical method?

Answer: In the author's opinion, the personal biographies of students of the UTA at the University of Wrocław can block the reception of educational content. This is confirmed not only by the analysis made in this text, but also by a number of psychological and sociological publications, which explain the value of ones own biography in the process of collecting specific educational content and experience. One such well-known concept is Pierre Bourdieu's theory. Bourdieu states categorically that principally the habitus (social origin, social position, economic activity, social environment, development of available capital, patterns of behaviour, symbolism of the language used, etc.) has an essential impact on the perception, analysis and evaluation of all axio-normative social processes of each individual. Educational processes which have an eminently social character are in this regard no exception.

It is therefore important to be aware that an educator wishing to convey relevant content to UTA students may encounter passivity, resistance or aversion, due to social experience and mental and physical baggage. The reasons for this may be very diverse. One is that the biographies of each UTA student, which, due to its uniqueness, makes any attempt to standardize the education process an enormous intellectual and organizational challenge.

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INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE INSPIRED BY GENEALOGICAL INQUIRY CONCERNING FAMILY HISTORIES

*I submit this paper with acknowledgement to **Grzegorz Mendyka**, whose passion for genealogy is so great that no one can remain indifferent to it.*

The idea behind the „inter-Generational European Memories” project was to collect the memories of seniors pertaining to people, places, and events which are relevant to local communities. The project draws attention to the important connection between active ageing, establishing intergenerational relationships, and nurturing memories. The work of genealogists who, following their interests, investigate family histories, reconstruct biographies of family members, and thus preserve the memories of their ancestors, may serve as an example of the legitimacy of the approach here presented.

WHAT IS GENEALOGY?

The term „genealogy” stems from Greek: „genos” means „family”, and „logos” means „word” or „knowledge”. Therefore, in free translation, the term may denote „a story of a family”. In my opinion, such interpretation not only has a linguistic base, but it also emphasises the dedication and the passion with which genealogists discover and present family histories. That is because we may discern two types of definition of the notion: the traditional one found in encyclopaedias, and the one coined by the hobbyists. Wikipedia defines genealogy as „one of the auxiliary historical studies that consists in investigating family relations on the basis of kinship and affinity. The subjects that are of particular interest to genealogists are selected families, their ancestry, history, and mutual family relations and the histories of the family members” (<http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genealogia>, 2014). Similarly, *Słownik Wyrazów Obcych* (1995, p. 383) mentions the subsidiary role to history which genealogy plays. It states that it is a branch of science „which investigates kinship relations between individuals and the dates of births, marriages, and deaths”. What is more, it is claimed therein that „it is family history, written down or preserved as oral tradition; bloodline (...) ancestry, the beginning of something” (p. 383). While

genealogists tend to acknowledge these definitions, they emphasise the importance of the branch to the researchers and their families. Małgorzata Nowaczyk, a Pole living in Canada, a genealogist and the author of *Poszukiwanie przodków. Genealogia dla każdego* [Searching for Ancestors. Genealogy for Everyone] – a book which constitutes an introduction to investigating family history – maintains that: „As one can see, genealogy is a description of kinship and affinity relations as well as a record of dates of life events. In the popular understanding of the term, genealogy is family history, a scaffold which makes it possible to present the richness of our family histories, to supplement them with information about class and social status, wealth, professions, and religion of our ancestors. That is how the formal notion of genealogy is interlocked with family history, in which the life stories of family members are described on a genealogical basis in their historical, social, and geographical contexts. Family history is made up of data about social ancestry, wealth, emigration, military service, education, professional activity, and other types of information on family members (...) And although family history cannot be described accurately without proper genealogy, the genealogy of a family can exist without any of the supplementary data which constitutes fascinating family histories” (Nowaczyk, 1995, pp. 32-33). Elsewhere, the same author states: „Genealogy consists in revealing mysteries, in a magical encounter with those who, although they have passed away, still live within us. Work on the genealogy of one’s own family consists not only of the description of family relations. It is first and foremost an attempt to understand our ancestors and the world they lived in. The emotional approach to genealogical investigations – the emotional involvement – is clearly understandable, because the studies are directly related to we ourselves. Had our ancestors been unable to survive, we would not be here at all” (p. 18). That is why genealogy is both a science and a hobby; it is an adventure rooted in reliable resources, and entire families are welcome to participate in it, as well as all the people who have some knowledge which might contribute to the discovery of a new episode in the never-ending family history. It therefore plays an essential role in (re)constructing family relations.

HOW IS GENEALOGICAL DATA COLLECTED?

In their research, genealogists rely upon diverse sources. **Official records** are commonly mentioned. Certain events in family history are recorded therein in writing. One can enumerate government documents, such as certificates of birth, marriage, and death stored in registry offices, and religious records, such as certificates of baptism, marriage, and death stored in parish archives. Important data can also be found in legal and tax documentations, as well as records and in state archives, school archives, etc. **Private records** constitute the second group. These include memoirs, diaries, and other works of individual creativity, such as stories, poems, or even sketches, drawings, and paintings. **Photographs** are crucial in this context, because they preserve images of family members. When juxtaposed with photographs, the data from birth certificates appears more real, and our ancestors are revealed as real human beings who lived life histories of their own. Often a photo becomes an incentive to undertake genealogical investigation. M. Nowaczyk provides an account of the birth of a need to learn more about one’s ancestors which would later develop into a genealogical hobby: „I was left

with a box of old family photos. (...) I really liked these old figures standing stiffly in their old-fashioned clothes, depicted in sepia. And suddenly I realised that I had problems with the information written on these images that were so well-kept by the emigrants – I did not know who the people in the photos were, where the pictures were taken, I did not know the dates (...). I felt that the ancestors stared at me with reproach, because I did not remember who they were and I did not care about them” (Nowaczyk, 2005, p. 14). Krzysztof Konecki denotes the temporal character of photographs in which they play the role of „prosthetic memory” (2005, p. 44), which points to the opportunity to preserve a moment in time, a particular situation. Similarly, Piotr Sztompka calls it „a prosthetic part in the perception of social life” (2005, p. 17), which is expressed in the fact that all that can be seen can also be preserved in photos. The following words of Susan Sontag seem particularly adequate in this context: „The power of photography lies in the fact that it allows for an analysis of the moments that time immediately replaces with new ones” (Sontag, 1978, p. 111). This analysis of photos, presenting frozen fragments of the past, is of crucial importance in genealogical investigations, and it is an impetus to seek a new source: **interviews with family members**. Such home interviews comprise spoken information, family stories, and discussions which often take place at Christmas, Easter, or All Saints Day. These celebrations present an opportunity to discover and discuss the afore-mentioned private records, in particular: photographs (Jurczyk-Romanowska & Mendyka, 2013, p. 52). They bring to mind the interviews with the use of photography described by K. Konecki (Konecki, 2005, p. 46), and they result in a broader knowledge of family history.

Grzegorz Mendyka states that „undertaking genealogical investigations often leads to the idea of organising family meetings, where young people can learn, to their utter astonishment, that a computer can not only be used to play games, but also to stay in touch with relatives” (Mendyka 2012a, p. 58). It ought to be noted that the Internet now presents new possibilities for genealogical research, because it provides access to birth certificate databases such as: geneteka (<http://www.geneteka.genealodzy.pl>, accessed 2013-11-21), Poznan-Project (<http://poznan-project.psn.pl>, accessed 2013-11-21), or the Mormon Center of Family History (<https://familysearch.org>, accessed 2013-11-21). These three examples are but a few of the number of opportunities that the Internet provides for genealogical research; however, to address this issue in more detail it would be necessary to write a separate paper. From the perspective of intergenerational relations, it should be emphasised that the Web makes it possible to easily and relatively inexpensively communicate with relatives, regardless of their place of residence.

The list of possible sources of data should be completed with specific places. Cemeteries play a crucial role here, because they are the locations where family memories are cultivated. They are also connected with the annual celebrations of All Saints’ Day, and the family meetings which accompany them, which is a natural opportunity to commemorate ancestors and increase one’s knowledge of them.

Each official and private document, regardless of whether they are used in their physical or digital form, provides specific material content. Genealogists attempt to decode them independently; such documents, however, are frequently an incentive to talk with other people, to establish contacts with individuals whose life stories are intertwined with those of the family of the researcher. That is why it is necessary to emphasise the role which genealogical investigations play in communication and integration.

HOW ARE THE RESULTS OF GENEALOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS PRESENTED?

It is only human to boast of one's own success. This is also the case with genealogists, who present the results of their work in various forms and to many people. In relation to the form of the presentations, one should mention **family trees**, which can often be considered true works of art. One should also not forget that there are a number of computer programmes which can be used to generate family trees.

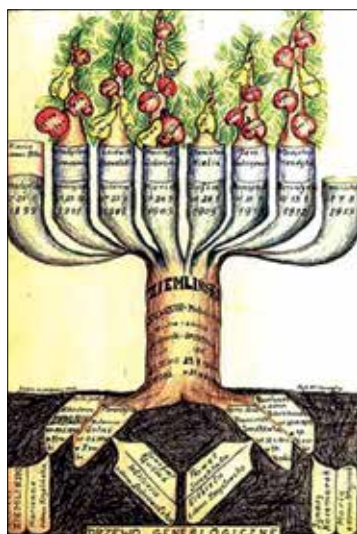


Fig. 1.
Family tree of the Ziemiński
family of Krobia.

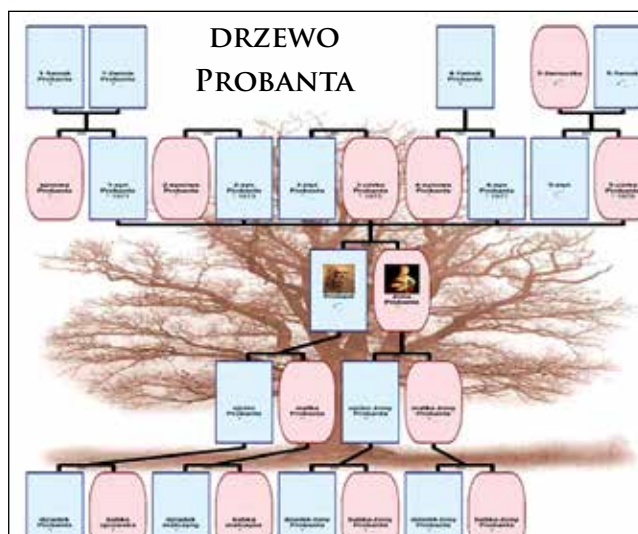


Fig. 2.
Probant family tree.

Source Fig. 1. Fig. 2. : Grzegorz Mendiya's archives.

It is quite obvious that genealogists use family photos in their research. These are often organised into albums, often described as family chronicles. *Księga Pamiątkowa Rodziny Ziemińskich z Krobia 1867-1967* [Memory Book of the Ziemiński Family of Krobia 1867-1967] is an interesting example. „It cannot be perceived as a traditional family photo album; it is more of a family history written on the basis of photos and family documents, such as telegrams, wedding invitations, death certificates, and occasional notes, such as birthday wishes in the form of poems, or letters written by family members. What is more, not only is the history described in beautiful prose and poetry, but it is also richly illustrated with family trees drawn by the author, tables with dates of births, deaths, marriages, and surname changes, and hand-drawn maps. Here we can find obituaries and sketches of tomb stones, which seem to replace photos which would typically accompany these events, and also – on the other hand – drawings of bunches of flowers which were given to relatives celebrating birthdays.

The regional identity of the family (whose ancestors would settle in various parts of Poland) is presented through postcards depicting regional folk clothes. The professions are described through press clippings, advertisements, labels, and prices of products, or even debt collection records. Sometimes the illustrations made by the author, using a number of artistic techniques, constitute an aesthetic supplement to the content presented in the pages of the book” (Jurczyk-Romanowska & Mendyka, 2013, p. 37-38)



Fig. 3. Memory Book of the Ziemliński Family of Krobia.

Source: Grzegorz Mendyka's archives.



Fig. 4. A page from the Memory Book of the Ziemliński Family of Krobia.

Source: Grzegorz Mendyka's archives.

As one can conclude from the list of diverse pieces of information constituting a family chronicle, „gathering” various sources which may provide knowledge about family history is an integral element of the work of genealogists. Many of the researchers turn their findings into home museums, which include such elements as family trees, souvenirs left by their ancestors, children’s works of sentimental value, photos of the family and the places where the family resides, chronicles, descriptions, and other souvenirs. Tatiana W. Galkina states that „What makes home museums different from public museums (state, institutional, or social) is that they are essentially archives. The main aim of such a museum is to preserve family heritage for future generations, it is to commemorate ‘the glorious histories of the fathers and the grandfathers’¹. What is more, the safety function¹ of a home museum is connected with its educational function, which implies the lasting character of the family, and reinforces the image and the prestige of the family” (Galkina, 2012, pp. 103-104). Russian research indicates that 94% of young adults keep various family souvenirs, and that only 7% have ever conducted any genealogical inquiries (Galkina, 2012, p. 102). One should bear in mind that the specificity of Russian history, with its forced relocations and official edicts against regional and national traditions, must have undoubtedly influenced the data acquired by the aforementioned author. That is why comparative studies in different countries could produce interesting results.



Fig. 5. Family tree made of portraits of the Sternberg family (Czech Republic).

Source: *The Family Tree*. Retrieved June 30, 2014 from <http://www.omnilexica.com/?q=the+family+tree>.

Genealogists often establish associations and publish periodicals to present the results of their work. One of them is the Wrocław-based Śląskie Towarzystwo Genealogiczne [Silesian Genealogical Association] established in 1992. In 2012 the Association published the first issue of *Zeszyty Śląskiego Towarzystwa Genealogicznego we Wrocławiu* [Periodicals of the Silesian Genealogical Association in Wrocław]. It was the initiative of its chairman Grzegorz Mendyka. The issues present principally the genealogies of the members of the Association, and the results are also often published on a number of blogs, websites, and internet forums.

¹ A family museum allows the family members to feel safer.

ACROSS GENERATIONS, THAT IS, COOPERATION IN (RE)CONSTRUCTING FAMILY HISTORIES

The works of genealogists presented above, those aimed at discovering information about family history as well as those presenting the results, can undoubtedly be appreciated for their contribution to intergenerational dialogue. As T. Galina points out, „The biggest [educational - EJR] influence in this case is presented by the combined work of the representatives of the older and the younger generations during, for example, drawing family trees, researching archives and records, interviews with relatives, writing down family legends, compiling memoirs, or discovering museum pieces. Therefore, in the cooperation between family members, the axiological, investigative, informational and cognitive, and communicative functions of home museums are implemented” (2012, p. 104). Grzegorz Mendyka agrees with these ideas, as he points out that „Family meetings are the best means of breaking intergenerational barriers and establishing family and social relations. The most energetic organisers of family meetings have the opportunity to include the members of the immediate and the extended family in the preparations. However, it is especially important to work with seniors, whose experience leads to many great ideas. They also have a lot of free time to devote to these pre-meeting (and not only) ideas” (Mendyka, 2012a, pp. 58-59). The same author also argues that it is a calling, as it were, of seniors to take part in genealogical investigations. „Seniors, by definition, have the greatest *a priori* knowledge of the family and their ancestors. They are pre-destined to make the young (their descendants) aware of their family and regional heritage. By undertaking genealogical research in a family, they provide the opportunity to deepen - or even re-establish - family relations, intergenerational integration, and to pass down to their relatives and descendants knowledge of the histories of their ancestors, their family region, and history” (Mendyka, 2012a, p. 56). What is more, one should not forget that there are a number of young people among genealogical hobbyists who, in their investigations, often use modern information and communication technologies (and, at the same time, use their knowledge and skills to educate their older colleagues), who develop computer software which is a practical tool in genealogical research, who manage databases, or who create websites for genealogists. „These young amateur genealogists (hobbyists, not dilettantes) can often travel across Poland to find their great-grandmothers baptism certificate. They use state-of-the-art equipment which brings to mind sci-fi novels, they take photos of old books of birth records to preserve them for the future” (Nowaczyk, 2005, pp. 306-307).

This intergenerational dialogue, organised around the search for one's roots, certainly results in the reconstruction of family biographies. On the other hand, however, the discussions, the cooperation in research, the shared joy of discovering even minor details from the lives of their ancestors, the hands trembling with excitement during the reading of a newly discovered document, form the family as a community, as well as its individual members, which results in the creation of a new quality of relationship, and a new mutual perception of relatives. They influence the future family history.

SUMMARY

In this outline of genealogical work, it should be emphasised that each human history is connected with family history, and finding out one's own ancestry is included in the assumptions of the „inter-Generational European Memories” project. The areas discussed therein pertain to memories, promotion of active living among seniors, and intergenerational dialogue. The research method employed in the project was the biographical method focused on the educational paths of seniors. Genealogical investigations can, therefore, be perceived as closely related to this method, because they are based upon human memories, individual and collective (family) ones. Genealogy, as well as biography and autobiography, belong to the biographical approach, and memoirs and intergenerational dialogue play an important role there. That is why research inspired by genealogy can have particular importance from the scientific as well as the social perspective. As the sociologist Lewis Hine claimed: „A Human Document always secures the connection between the past, the present, and the future” (in: Sontag, 2012, p. 395), which is why intergenerational transfer, which is also present in genealogical research, can be considered relevant.

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**THE INTER-GENERATIONAL
EUROPEAN MEMORIES PROJECT**

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THE INTER-GENERATIONAL EUROPEAN MEMORIES PROJECT AS AN EXAMPLE OF ACTION BY THE EUROPEAN UNION IN RELATION TO OLDER PEOPLE

THE EUROPEAN UNION'S APPROACH TO THE AGING OF THE POPULATION

The problem of aging has been recognized by the European Union. Thus, in 1982 the European Parliament issued its first resolution on this matter. The problem of an aging population in future years was considered in the context of demographic, social, political and economic criteria. European Union initiatives and documents concerning the elderly are designated the Aging Policy. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union was published in 1989, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of age. Another very important EU document was A Proposal for a Council Decision and Community Actions for the Elderly, which was published in 1990. This document included proposals for co-operation in favour of the elderly, and inter-generational solidarity. It is worth noting that in response to the aging of the population, a number of actions have been taken to draw the attention of Member States to the problems of the elderly. Ewa Frąckiewicz (2009, pp.88-92) created a list of the most important documents regarding the elderly which includes:

- Age and Attitudes (1993);
- European Social Policy – A Way Forward for the Union (1994);
- Treaty of Amsterdam (1997);
- Towards a Europe for All Ages (1999),
- Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality (2001);
- The Demographic Future of Europe – from Challenge to Opportunity (2006);
- Ageing Well in the Information Society an i2010 Initiative Action Plan on Information and Communication Technologies and Ageing (2007).

It should be noted that these document show that the EU distinguishes two basic challenges: the aging of the population and the creation of the information society (civilization changes). Lifelong learning is a method which has reduced the risks from the these processes. Moreover, the European Union stressed that new technologies

should be used to protect older people from social exclusion. This idea has been reflected in the act: *Ageing well in the Information Society: Action Plan on Information and Communication Technologies and Ageing*¹ in which was formulated a plan to adapt ITC to the needs of older people. New technologies should be implement in three areas of seniors' activity: work, home and community. ITC associated with services for older people should enable them to (*Ageing well in the Information Society An i2010 Initiative Action Plan on Information and Communication Technologies and Ageing*, 2007, p.4):

- achieve longer working lives, while maintaining a work-life balance,
- participate in social life. Networking and access to public and commercial service could reduce the social isolation of older people, particularly in rural areas,
- live independently at home with the support of ITC.

The use of new technologies to support older people is right, but it should be noted that seniors should be able to use ITC. Therefore, the idea of Lifelong Learning is so important in the new reality. As indicated in the first chapter, education is of strategic importance for the prevention of the exclusion of older people, and for the development of the information society. It is the best way to develop people and the European economy. However, the concept of Lifelong Learning has a wide educational definition : as formal, non-formal, and in-formal education. Thus, seniors' education is not only limited to ITC teaching. Education should not only prevent social exclusion of this group of people, but also enable them to develop comprehensively.

The European Union notes the potential of lifelong learning to solve aging problems and development in Europe, as evidenced by the afore-mentioned documents. However, these documents include only diagnoses of the problem and possibilities for further action. They are the framework assumptions on which EU initiatives should be based. These assumptions are implemented in the framework of EU and national programmes. The education of older people until 2013 was the area of interest of the Grundtvig programme.

EDUCATION OF OLDER PEOPLE AS A PART OF THE GRUNDTVIG PROGRAM

Grundtvig is an educational programme concerned with non-professional adult education and the promotion of co-operation in this field at European level. Grundtvig has been a part of the Socrates II program. Since 2006/2007. In 2006 the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union established an initiative programme in the field of lifelong learning- *Lifelong Learning Programme* – LLP 2007-2013.

In the decision establishing the new program it was stated that the aim of this program is „to contribute through lifelong learning to the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge-based society, with sustainable economic

¹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Region, *Ageing well in the Information Society An i2010 Initiative Action Plan on Information and Communication Technologies and Ageing*.

development, more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, while ensuring good protection of the environment for future generations. In particular, it aims to foster interchange, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the Community so that they become a world quality reference" (Decision No 1720/2006/Fc of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning). One detailed objective of this program is „to contribute to increased participation in lifelong learning by people of all ages, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups, regardless of their socio-economic background" (Decision No 1720/2006/Fc of the European Parliament and the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of lifelong learning). In connection with this aim, the Grundtvig programme has been implemented under the LLP since 2007. Both *Socrates* and *Lifelong Learning Programme* are educational programmes of the European Community to promote and support international cooperation in education. Table 1 presents the structure of the Lifelong Learning Programme.

Table 1. Structure of Lifelong Learning Programme

LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME - LLP				
SECTORAL PROGRAMMES	Comenius Action for school	Erasmus Higher education	Leonardo da Vinci Vocational training	Grundtvig Adult education
TRANSVERAL PROGRAMME	Policy cooperation and innovation (Key activity 1)	Languages (Key activity 2)	Information-communication-technologies (Key activity 3)	Dissemination and exploitation of results (Key activity 4)
JEAN MONNET PROGRAMME The Jean Monnet programme stimulates teaching, research and reflection on European integration at higher education institutions throughout the world 3 key actions - Action Jean Monnet, European institutions, European associations				

Note. Adapted from: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/index_en.php (10.03.2014).

The Grundtvig programme is one of the four sectoral programs (Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig). Its aim is to support activities related to non-professional adult education in a very broad sense. This can be either formal, non-formal, or in-formal education. It is directed to various organizations dealing with non-professional adult education - the students and staff. Grundtvig primarily promotes co-operation in the field of education for those adults who are from disadvantaged groups e.g.: people with disabilities, the elderly, ethnic minorities, low-skilled, and living in areas with difficult access to learning opportunities for adults (<http://www.grundtvig.org.pl/odnosniki-podstawowe/informacje-o-programie-grundtvig>). The main objectives of the programme relate to:

- responding to the educational challenge of an aging population in Europe,
- help in providing adults with to improve their knowledge and competencies.

Whereas, operational objectives relate to:

- improvement in the quality and accessibility of mobility throughout Europe for people who take part in adult education, and to increase its volume;
- improvement in quality and increase in volume of co-operation between organizations engaged in adult education throughout Europe;
- assistance for people from disadvantaged groups and in marginal social contexts, in particular older people and those who have left education without basic qualifications, in order to give them alternative opportunities to access adult education;
- facilitation of the development of innovative practices in adult education and their transfer, including from one participating country to another;
- support for the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning;
- improvement in pedagogical approaches and the management of adult education organizations (<http://www.eurodesk.org>).

The Grundtvig programme consists of decentralized and centralized activities. Decentralized activities are managed and supported at national level by the National Agency. However, centralized activities are managed by the Executive Agency in Brussels acting at the European Commission (table 2)

Table 2. Activities under the the Grundtvig programme

Lifelong Learning - GRUNDTVIG		
Specific objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond to the educational challenge of an aging population in Europe, • help provide adults with, to improving their knowledge and competencies 	
Decentralized actions	Grundtvig Learning Partnerships	These are projects or workshops conducted by organizations and are focused on active engagement of adult learners and staff of adult education, including trips abroad.
	Senior Volunteering Projects	
	Grundtvig Workshops	
	In-Service Training for adult education staff	These actions relate to individual staff trips abroad
	Visits & Exchanges for adult education staff	
	Grundtvig Assistantships	
	Grundtvig Preparatory Visits	
Centralized actions	Multilateral Projects	aimed at improving adult education systems through the development and transfer of innovation and good practice
	Grundtvig Networks	working in particular on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improving the provision of learning opportunities in prisons and promoting the role of adult learning within strategies for the rehabilitation of Prisoners and ex-offenders; - developing strategies to address gaps in adult language learning, where provision is currently inadequate; - development of special needs adult education and strategies for inclusion in adult learning of people with disabilities; - transnational networking of regional partnerships, learning cities or regions, etc. with a strong adult learning dimension.
	Accompanying Measures	other initiatives aimed at promoting the objectives of the Grundtvig Programme

Note. Authors. Data are from: <http://www.grundtvig.org.pl>; <http://www.eurodesk.org>.

It should be emphasized that the Grundtvig programme includes both adult learners (students), staff, and adult education systems. It reflects a holistic approach to the education of adults. Moreover, it is important that it draws attention primarily to social groups in difficult situations. It accurately reflects the idea of lifelong learning. Jacques Delors and other members of the Commission note that: *It should open up opportunities for learning for all. For many different purposes - offering them a second or third chance, satisfying their desire for knowledge and beauty or their desire to surpass themselves, or making it possible to broaden and deepen strictly vocational forms of training, including practical training* (Delors, et al., 1996, p.38).

All EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Spain, Netherlands, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Latvia, Malta, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Hungary, Italy, United Kingdom) may participate in the Grundtvig project, additionally Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and in a limited way also Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

The fact that many countries are entitled to participate in the project provides an open formula for the programme. By initiating programmes like this, the European Union seeks to co-operate with many countries in the region to find common solutions in strategic fields. Therefore, EU members and countries outside the Union can work together and exchange experiences and good practices, so the two sides can learn from each other. The organization of this programme creates a plane of activities and agreements, thereby creating a new vision of adult education. Moreover, within the framework of Grundtvig the idea of mobility and study different cultures is implemented, which enriches the knowledge of cultural diversity in Europe, and teaches mutual understanding.

ABOUT INTER-GENERATIONAL EUROPEAN MEMORIES (GEM)²

The Inter-Generational European Memories (Gem) project³ was implemented within in framework of the Grundtvig Learning Partnership in 2012-2014. Six organizations - from Austria, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and Turkey - took part in the GEM project. As already mentioned in the first chapter, the European Union is facing the problem of aging and older citizens are at risk of social exclusion. Therefore, it should take action to include older people in the mainstream of social life. ITC skills are necessary for effective living in the information society. Moreover, knowledge of English is also important, because the European Union is an international and intercultural environment. It should be noted that older people want to be a part of social life, and older citizens have a need to acquire the necessary competencies in modern society.

Moreover, it is worth pointing out that seniors are facing problems of communication, not only with citizens of the same generation from the other European countries, where the obstacles are language and technical skills, but also with the local younger generation. The lack of mutual understanding between generations is a challenge for the EU. Older people are an important part of society because they are a living carrier of values, culture

² Part of this text was written on the basis of the project documentation prepared by the project coordinator -Aneta Kobylarek.

³ The GEM project website: <http://gem.project-website.org>.

and history. Their experiences are a valuable resource for other communities, which should be taken advantage. There is a need to raise awareness of the contribution that older people make to society. Moreover, using their knowledge and experiences make them feel that they are important and needed in society. On the other hand, the younger generation should have the opportunity to know and understand their parents' and grandparents' generations - who are, as noted, the natural source of the cultural and historical heritage - and also to exchange values, experiences and ideas. Inter-generational solidarity in the form of mutual support and co-operation between groups of people of different ages helps in achieving a society where people of all ages have a role to play in line with their needs and capacities, and can benefit from their community's economic and social progress on an equal basis. In summary, in the new reality it is important to take action against the marginalization of older people by equipping them with the necessary skills to function in society and to initiate activities aimed at integrating the generations.

Therefore the concept of the project is to gather together memories of seniors from the participating countries regarding people, places and events which are important for the wider local community. Activities in the GEM project were focused on three areas of interest:

- Memories - the systematic elaboration and preservation of the parts of seniors' memories;
- Active aging- transfer of knowledge by courses in ICT and languages;
- Solidarity between generations - and indication of the plane of inter-generational dialogue.

In the project older students, who do not know how use new technology or who do not speak English, took part in ITC and English courses conducted by young people. So, young teach seniors using new technology and English. Thus, an area of cooperation between generations was created. Seniors participated in biography workshops. During workshop they prepared their own biographies. Seniors shared their biographies - which are sources of experiences, knowledge, and values - with the younger generation, and then, with their help placed, them on the Internet. These biographies are therefore available to everybody. The result of this collaboration between seniors and the young was the creation of „Little Book of Memories“ which includes biographies of all seniors from various countries who took part in the project.

Research for the project was conducted by using the biography method. This method allows us to study the history of the participants and to compare the span life of older people from various European countries. Research was focused on the education paths of older people. Therefore, each participating organization conducted biography workshops and discussed the educational aspects of participants' lives. In this way, data was gathered which was then analysed by the researchers.

It should be noted that project was realized in two aspects: local (activities conducted by participating organizations) and international (activities realized during partners' meetings). International aspects included: partners' meetings, during which the concept of the project, aims to achieve, specific tasks of each partner, strategy of realization, methods of dissemination, types of evaluation, method of research, and courses for elderly were discussed. These meetings also provided an opportunity to exchange the experiences of each organization, and to share of methods of working with older people.

The first meeting of partners who took part in the GEM project was in Paris in October 2012. This initial meeting included a presentation by each organization, and an

account of their experiences and working methods. The project coordinator (Fundacja Pro Scientia Publica - Poland) had presented the concept of the project, its goals, tasks and timeline. The concept of the biography method and its usefulness in the GEM project were presented. The partners accepted this method, and so biography workshops were conducted. The aim of these workshops was to establish:

- What it is the biography method?
- How does the workshops procedure look?
- How should the workshops be planned?
- What are biography and autobiography?
- What activities could be used during the biography method?
- How to create a biography?

The aim of biography workshops for partner organizations was teach them how use the biography method, and to equip them with the necessary skills to conduct the workshops. The Paris meeting also established the type of evaluation (questionnaire on the project website) and methods of dissemination of Project (e.g. flyer, account on facebook, website).

During the next meetings (in Sevilla in March 2013; Nazili in September 2013 and Roma in March 2014) all partners presented how the strategy of how the project was implemented in their organization. Specifics and problems with the implementation of the strategy were also discussed at the meeting. All partners discussed the draft of the course in detail. After each meeting there was an evaluation of meeting and an activities report was compiled. As part of the dissemination process a newsletter was published, which included an agenda and the next stage of project implementation. The final meeting will be in Wroclaw in Poland, during which a scientific conference concerning the biography method will be organized. Each partner will present their organization and give an account of their GEM project implementation. The realization of the project, and its achievements and problems will be discussed. Researchers will present their articles on the biography method and the situation of older people in the new society. The results of analysis of biographies created by seniors who took part in project will be presented.

It should be noted that a very important aspect of project was mobility and the experiencing of other cultures. The wide geographical range of partners (Italy, Poland, France, Turkey, Spain, Austria) for mobility and common meetings had guaranteed the right process for a real intercultural exchange of ideas, thanks to which it had increased tolerance and understanding between citizens of different countries at a European level. The partners' meetings were also a good opportunity to get to know the working methods of other organizations, and to exchange good practices relating to adult learning. Mobilities included representatives of organizations, staff and seniors who had taken part in project. The aim of European mobilities were:

- comparing learning processes dependent on cultural factors;
- comparing important values, common history and personal meanings on a European and regional platform;
- meeting „living” cultures in everyday life situations;
- establishing strong international contacts, which will be useful in other projects in the future;
- meeting diverse European culture „in action”.

Another aspect of the GEM project was the local level, which included activities in participating organizations. Principles established during the partners' meetings were implemented by organizations at local level. Each organization conducted biography workshops, in accordance with the objectives of the project. Depending on need, English and ITC courses were also realized. Each organization created opportunities for seniors to work with young people in creating seniors' biographies about their educational path. Biographies created in each country were collated as „The Little Book of Memories” which is a collection of biographies of all the countries participating in the project. „The Little Book of Memories” is available online at gem.x25.pl. These biographies were analysed during research realized within the framework of the GEM project.

To summarise, the GEM project had two dimensions: international and local. The international dimension included discussion on the concept of the project, and the manner of its implementation. Assumptions made during the partner meetings were implemented by organization at a local level.

It should be pointed out that the GEM project had multi-dimensional effects. It can point to the impact of the project on the elderly, young people, staff and teachers.

Thanks to the project, the senior learners:

- discovered a path of lifelong learning as a way which helps them maintain a sense of meaning and purpose.
- taken advantage of the opportunities provided by e-technology for inter-generational and international dialogue.
- broadened their horizons through international cooperation and partnership meetings.
- improved communication with the younger generation by finding and sharing common values.
- improved their use of English for communicating their own culture and history.
- learnt how to become active citizens.

Thanks to the project the younger participants:

- learnt to exchange ideas, thoughts, and experiences with people from the older generation.
- learnt how to take an active role in local community life.

Teachers (ICT, English courses, biography workshop) and project staff:

- found new methods of learning for adults, especially senior citizens.
- discovered new methods of working with seniors.
- exchanged experiences and good didactic practices with European colleagues.
- broadened their knowledge of European culture and partnership activity.

As indicated earlier, six organizations from various countries participated in the inter-Generational European Memories project. There included private and public organizations. The following organizations took part on the project:

- Fundcja „Pro Scientia Publica” from Poland - coordinator of the project. The main aim of the foundation is „the support of self-development of young academics and the support of various educational initiatives which strive to

create a bond of cooperation between circles, whose mission is scholarly work and popularisation of science: between the masters and apprentices of the society of knowledge, graduates undertaking their first work in the field of adult education and the headmasters and instructors of educational projects, seniors of the Universities of Third Age and students – trainees” (<http://gem.project-website.org>).

- Association M3 (M CUBE) from France - it is an NGO organization which (...)” is a laboratory for conceptualizing new ideas for the implementation of technological advances in the social field” (<http://gem.project-website.org>). Activities of the organization include ideas promoting intercultural and inter-generational communication, and new ideas in implementing developments in technology to bring about progress within society. This organization cooperates with other associations such as E-seniors and work with older people.
- Nazilli Public Training Centre and Evening Craft School (Nazilli HEM) from Turkey. It is an organization of non-formal education. The institution supports public activities. „The mission is to develop the living quality of the society, improve the social wealth, to give a chance to develop the skills of those who have no possibility to be useful for themselves or society” (<http://gem.project-website.org>).
- Universidad de Sevilla from Spain – „The University of Seville is an institution that provides the public service of higher education by means of studies, teaching, and research, as well as the generation, development and diffusion of knowledge to serve citizens and society” (<http://gem.project-website.org>).
- The Institute for Applied Language Integration Ottakring (IASIO) from Austria - it is „non-profit organisation dedicated to meeting the challenges of different languages and cultures in Europe of the 21st century by creating solutions based on information technology. The Institute’s main fields of activity are multilingual IT applications, cultural acceptance of software, as well as efficient e-learning systems for foreign languages. The Insitute wants multilingualism and cultural acceptance to become a benefit of IT applications” (<http://gem.project-website.org>).
- Ente per la ricerca e formazione (E.Ri.Fo.) from Italy - organization was created in 2000 in Roma. The aim of E. Ri. Fo. is „research-training- and guidance integrated interventions and promotes cultural exchanges and mobility in Europe, having as a main objective the valorization of non formal and informal learning.(...) E.Ri.Fo forwards the value of accessibility, so that everyone can take advantage of the ongoing great worldwide changes without being their victims, through the exercise of the right/duty to training, guidance and research” (<http://gem.project-website.org>).

It should be noted that all organization promote non-formal and formal education. Organizations in their missions also draw on the importance of education and learning

in the new reality. Moreover, all institutions involved in this partnership had already worked with seniors and tried to protect them from social exclusion. Earlier experiences of participant institutions in the field of adult education were exploited in the implementation of the project. For the institutions involved, the project helps them to get to know new methods of working with seniors and to find new learning possibilities for adults, especially for seniors, which could be useful in the organization's future activities. Besides, thanks to the implementation of the project, each organization has improved and increased its activities in the public domain at the local and European level. The project partnership could result in future cooperation with other projects or initiatives for the community, especially for the integration of vulnerable groups.

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THE POSSIBILITY OF USING QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS IN BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH (AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE BIOGRAPHIES GATHERED IN THE GEM PROJECT)

The paper aims to answer two questions:

1. whether qualitative content analysis can be used for analysis of the biographical data gathered during the GEM project;
2. how qualitative content analysis can be used successfully in analysis of the biographical data gathered during the GEM project.

To attain this aim the following areas were discussed: definitions of content analysis, definitions of text and documents and the characteristics of GEM biographies, textual, document and content analysis in the context of unobtrusive research, (auto-) biographical research, the possible use of qualitative content analysis in biographical research and the limits of the technique, the possible use of qualitative content analysis as a supportive technique for other methods and techniques and research.

DEFINITIONS OF QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

In one of the most fundamental methodological works on content analysis Klaus Krippendorff defines it as „a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). K. Krippendorff does not support the division of content analysis into quantitative and qualitative, however, his further discussion of the definition, the explanation of the understanding of „technique” (specialised procedure which is divorceable from the personal authority of the researcher), „reliability” (research techniques should result in findings that are replicable - researchers working at different points in time and perhaps under different circumstances should get the same results when applying the same technique to the same data) and (to a lesser extent) „validity” clearly possesses neo-positivist traits and places his comprehension of content analysis in the scope of quantitative research (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18).

On the other hand Heidi Julien defines content analysis as „the intellectual process of categorizing qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables or

themes. [...] This analytic method is a way of reducing data and making sense of it – of deriving meaning” (Julien, 2008, p. 120). This definition places content analysis in the scope of interpretative paradigm.

As Philipp Mayring specifies: „Qualitative content analysis defines itself within this framework as an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytical rules and step by step models, without rash quantification” (Mayring, 2000, p. 2). Yan Zhang and Barbara M. Wildemuth who further elaborate on this topic state that „Qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words or extracting objective content from texts to examine meanings, themes and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text. It allows researchers to understand social reality in a subjective but scientific manner” (Zhang, Wildemuth, p. 1).

DEFINITIONS OF TEXT AND DOCUMENTS CONTRASTED WITH THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GEM BIOGRAPHIES

All of the authors quoted above include references to „text” in their definitions of content analysis. Thus, text needs further discussion. And so David Silverman uses the term „text” „to identify data consisting of words and images that have become recorded without the intervention of a researcher” (Silverman, Marvasti, 2008, p. 74). This definition is problematic in the case of GEM biographies which came into existence in the result of intervention of researches involved in the project.

However K. Krippendorff presents a more elaborated understanding of text: the term „text” in his definition of content analysis is not intended to restrict this technique to written material. „The phrase »or other meaningful matter« is included in parentheses to indicate that in content analysis works of art, images, maps, sounds, signs, symbols, and even numerical records may be included as data that is, they may be considered as texts - provided they speak to someone about phenomena outside of what can be sensed or observed. The crucial distinction between text and what other research methods take as their starting point is that a text means something to someone, it is produced by someone to have meanings for someone else, and these meanings therefore must not be ignored and must not violate why the text exists in the first place. Text - the reading of text, the use of text within a social context, and the analysis of text - serves as a convenient metaphor in content analysis” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 19). Thus, those definitions of texts encompass a great scope of data available for content analysis: not only commonly understood text, but also „works of art, images, maps, sounds, signs, symbols, and even numerical records”. According to Krippendorff’s understanding of content, GEM biographies can be considered „meaningful material” (and therefore: texts).

A similar understanding (combined with the linking of text with qualitative research) can be found in the work of Claire Ballinger: „Text, which in its broadest sense is anything in written form, constitutes the basic medium through which most qualitative analysis is carried out. Texts for research purposes are generated in many different ways; some are naturally occurring (e.g., newspaper reports, minutes of meetings, or policy documents); some are created following the use of research methods such as semi-structured interviews or focus groups (through audiorecording and transcription) or produced by the researcher (such as fieldnotes within participant observation); and

others are the consequence of a process of „translation“ whereby a social phenomenon that is the object of study is turned into text. In this latter category, Ian Parker and colleagues include television programs, cities, film, gardens, bodies, and silence” (Ballinger, 2008, p. 863). C. Ballinger makes an interesting comment when he states that: „The epistemological status of a text is contingent on the set of assumptions and tenets underpinning the research endeavor for which it has been generated” (Ballinger, 2008, p. 863).

Sharon Lockyer writes about the „naturally occurring status” of text. And so „Texts exist in society before the researcher decides to analyze them. Therefore, insights into meaning construction and the ideological implications of texts are not subject to the biases that are evident when data sources are created for, or around, the research project. Texts are also readily available, which can quicken the research process and prevent ethical difficulties surrounding access (although some ethical considerations still apply; for example, regarding anonymity)” (Lockyer, 2008, p. 865). Again, the nature of GEM biographies is problematical, as they have been produced as a result of the intervention of researchers. However, once they have been posted on-line, they might become already existing texts used by other researchers who were not involved in the project or who were not directly involved in producing them.

Another important term which may be helpful in understanding the nature of GEM biographies and linking them with qualitative content analysis is „document”. As Jean J. Schensul states „a document is a text-based file that may include primary data (collected by the researcher) or secondary data (collected and archived or published by others) as well as photographs, charts, and other visual materials. Documents constitute the basis for most qualitative research” (Schensul, 2008, p. 232). This author divides documents into primary data documents and secondary data documents. And so „Primary data documents (PDDs) include transcriptions of interviews; participant observation fieldnotes; photographs of field situations taken by the researcher as records of specific activities, rituals, and personas (with associated locational and descriptive data); and maps and diagrams drawn by the researcher or by field assistants or participants in a study (with accompanying explanations)” (Schensul, 2008, p. 232). On the other hand „Secondary data documents (SDDs) are materials that are important in describing the historical background and current situation in a community or country where the research is being conducted. They include maps, demographic data, measures of disparity in health or educational status (records of differences in types of surgery, disease distribution, graduation rates, etc.), and de-identified quantitative databases that include variables of interest to the researcher” (Schensul, 2008, p. 232).

The GEM biographies can for sure be considered primary data documents. However, they can also be used secondary data documents, for instance in the case of using netnography (this possibility will be discussed in the further parts of the paper).

An interesting point is made by Anssi Peräkylä who underlines a distinction between interview and naturally occurring material (Peräkylä, 2005, p. 869). However, this author also states that in most cases the distinction is blurred and that most data gathered is marked by the researcher. The difference is not on how the data is gathered, but rather what the researched intends to do with it. They can rather be seen on continuum with data being more or less interview or naturally occurring material (Peräkylä, 2005, pp. 869-870). In the case of GEM biographies the boundaries are blurred: data is gathered like an interview but can be used for research and analysed like text.

TEXTUAL, DOCUMENT, CONTENT AND VIRTUAL AS UNOBTUSIVE RESEARCH IN THE CONTEXT OF GEM BIOGRAPHIES

The superior category here is unobtrusive research, the forms of which are textual and document analysis. The most subordinate category is content analysis which is a form of textual or document analysis. Thus, textual and document analysis can be considered methods and content analysis technique of research. Virtual analysis is an overlapping category which refers to the study of virtual data and there can be textual, document or content analysis (generally: unobtrusive research) of virtual data.

As Lynda M. Baker defines it: „unobtrusive research, which can be defined as methods that involve no direct or overt contact with the study participants” (Baker, 2008, p. 904). Thus, the nature of GEM biographies is problematic. They have been gathered in an obtrusive way, by means of interviews with the participants. However they have been turned into texts and posted on-line. And so L.M. Baker categorizes data for nonobtrusive research into print and nonprint. Internet resources are categorised as nonprint: „computers”, however two methods are named: transactional log analysis (TLA) and netnography which are focused on the way people use internet, not on existing texts gathered on websites (Baker, 2008, p. 905), such as GEM biographies. GEM biographies in this perspective should be considered nonprint print materials (texts gathered in a virtual reality). L.M. Baker clearly places content analysis in the cope of unobtrusive research: „Data analysis for unobtrusive research includes content, thematic, or semiotic analysis” (Baker, 2008, p. 904).

Sh. Lockyer provides the following definition: „Textual analysis is a method of data analysis that closely examines either the content and meaning of texts or their structure and discourse. Texts, which can range from newspapers, television programs, and blogs to architecture, fashion, and furniture, are deconstructed to examine how they operate, the manner in which they are constructed, the ways in which meanings are produced, and the nature of those meanings. Sociologists, geographers, historians, linguists, communications and media studies researchers, and film researchers use textual analysis to assess texts from a range of cultural settings” (Lockyer, 2008, p. 865).

As this author further elaborates: „Textual analysis is a method of data analysis that closely examines either the content and meaning of texts or their structure and discourse. Texts, which can range from newspapers, television programs, and blogs to architecture, fashion, and furniture, are deconstructed to examine how they operate, the manner in which they are constructed, the ways in which meanings are produced, and the nature of those meanings. Sociologists, geographers, historians, linguists, communications and media studies researchers, and film researchers use textual analysis to assess texts from a range of cultural settings” (Lockyer, 2008, p. 865).

Władysław Jacek Paluchowski emphasizes the fact that in the case of text analysis, which has been created and exists irrespective of the researcher’s interest, content analysis becomes a typical non-invasive technique; people unaware of the research are being investigated, therefore it is unlikely for the research to cause changes in their behavior. (Paluchowski, 2000, p. 57). Heidi Julien also points out that content analysis „is nonintrusive because it is applied to data already collected or existing text” (Julien, 2008, p. 121). This non-intrusiveness is one of the characteristic features of the technique of content analysis and its origins lie in the nature of the text itself. As Sh. Lockyer

states: „Textual analysis is a term used to refer to a variety of primarily qualitative methodologies or models. Research that focuses on the analysis of textual content will adopt either content analysis (both quantitative and qualitative approaches), semiotics, phenomenology, or hermeneutics. Research on textual structure and discourse employs different methodologies, including genre analysis, mise-en-scene analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, structural analysis, poststructural analysis, or postmodern textual analysis. Each methodology has its own nuances, inflections, strengths, and weaknesses. A number of theoretical frameworks are available to researchers when interpreting any text. The framework adopted will depend on the researcher's preferences. Some researchers explore texts, their conventions and their relationship to realism, whereas others assess the construction and reinforcement of cultural myths” (Lockyer, 2008, p. 865).

Lisdaz F. Prior provides the following characteristic of document analysis: „The standard approach to the analysis of documents focuses primarily on what is contained within them. In this frame, documents are viewed as conduits of communication between, say, a writer and a reader - conduits that contain meaningful messages. Such messages are usually in the form of writing but can engage other formats such as maps, architectural plans, films, and photographs” (Prior, 2008, p. 230).

Interestingly, Kimberly A. Neuendorf states that any type of message pool may be deemed as content analysis, as long as the pertinent characteristics of this method apply (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 17). Thus, according to this author it is procedure which is more important than the data analysed, and it is exactly the use of unique research procedure which determines whether given research is a content analysis (not the data being analysed). However, it must be emphasized that K. A. Neuendorf considers content analysis to be an exclusively quantitative method, basing on numerical aimed at determining count of key categories and interdependencies between variables in order to test hypotheses of the researcher (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 14). Thus (according to Neuendorf) this characteristic procedure which determines whether a study is content analysis is qualitative.

Regarding virtual research Kristie Sammure and Lisa M. Given state that „Virtual research can refer to both data collection by means of the internet and research about the internet itself” (Sammure, Given, 2008, p. 926). In the case of GEM biographies the researcher deals with the first category.

As those authors interestingly note: „Personal documents (both solicited and unsolicited) are often considered as an optimal means for understanding how individuals experience life events. These documents may take the form of autobiographies, journals, or diaries. Although qualitative researchers have traditionally used hardcopy versions of these texts, online versions are becoming increasingly popular. This shift to online versions of these personal documents may stem in part from the fact that the internet enables researchers to access a wider array of participants from around the globe, enhancing the scope of a study on a particular phenomenon; however, another reason for the shift is the proliferation of personal web postings (e.g., blogs) on a variety of topics” (Sammure, Given, 2008, p. 927). GEM biographies are very specific, as they cannot be entirely considered personal documents, because they were gathered, created and posted by researchers and project participants, not by the narrators themselves. However they can be considered personal biographies created by the researchers of the GEM project and the people who were the participants of the project.

(AUTO-)BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

Mark P. Freeman states that „Autobiography is among the most important and valuable vehicles for exploring the human realm in all of its depth, complexity, and richness. Although there are numerous ways to define and conceptualize autobiography, for current purposes it may be considered the specific kind of text that results from the first-person interpretive reconstruction of either a life in its entirety or a significant portion of it, with the aim not merely of recounting »what happened when« but also of understanding, from the vantage point of the current time, the meaning and movement of the past” (Freeman, 2008, pp. 45-46).

This author emphasizes the „natural” character of this research, its deep rootedness in the human condition and mental activity: „a significant feature of human lives is that the meaning of experience frequently changes over time, thereby necessitating multiple readings. This suggests that a further significant feature of human lives is that they require recollection, »looking backward« again and again, resituating, reinterpreting, and rewriting the past as a function of one’s ever-changing present. Life events, therefore, may be considered »episodes« in an evolving narrative of the self, and just as the past is perpetually rewritten from the standpoint of the present, so too is the self, with the relationship between self and autobiographical narrative being a dialectical one through and through; even as the self is the source of autobiography, autobiography is the source of the self” (Freeman, 2008, p. 47).

Janet L. Miller characterizes the qualitative approach to biographical research: „Whether one is interested in researching and representing the biography of a deceased individual or one who is living, qualitative researchers typically first must attend to ways and reasons why they have chosen particular persons as subjects for biographical research. Researchers also must locate and decide on which pertinent archival or repository materials might be further researched and analyzed, whom they might wish to interview in relation to the subject, and in what document analyses, beyond formally archived materials - including, for example, newspapers, letters, diaries, journals, video - and audiorecordings of the subject - they might need to engage further” (Miller, 2008, p. 61).

This author provides also the specification of different categories of biographical data: „Qualitative researchers may well choose subjects whose work and personal lives are catalogued within special collection repositories or archives, most often housed in public as well as college and university libraries. These repositories or archives hold government, business, or organization materials and records deemed to have permanent historical value” (Miller, 2008, p. 62). In this context GEM project can be considered a way of creating an on-line archive of less known individuals. Content analysis in this case is most similar to what J.L. Miller lists as archival materials method of doing qualitative biography research.

J. L. Miller emphasizes that „Although the mechanics of coding data receive major attention from many qualitative research methods texts, and biographers may want to familiarize themselves with various coding techniques prescribed initially to construct major themes from data, biographers tend to focus on relating those particular themes to larger interpretations about the subject’s life and times” (Miller, 2008, p. 63). In qualitative content analysis it is latent content and context of the content which provides a similar dimension of understanding the analyzed data.

There are clear links between qualitative biographical research and qualitative content analysis. Those are: the possibility of working with broadly understood texts, possibility of unobtrusive research of material gathered by other researchers, the need to understand the analyzed material in broader contexts and latent meanings. Therefore, the possibility of using qualitative content analysis as a tool used in a broader qualitative biographical research context should be considered.

THE POSSIBLE USE AND LIMITS OF QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS AND GEM BIOGRAPHIES

There are some limits that arise from the specific feature of either GEM biographies or qualitative content analysis. For instance Claire Ballinger mentions the differences between different techniques of research. And so conversation analysis requires the non-verbal element to be present in the transcription (Ballinger, 2008, p. 863). In the case of GEM biographies all those elements have been edited out, so the possible analysis is limited and some methods and techniques cannot be used.

It is also obvious that GEM biographies (at least some of them) have undergone heavy editing, thus the possibility of understanding some of the latent content (which is often presented in the „not interesting“ parts of research material, which is usually edited for the sake of reader's interest) has been limited or even became impossible.

As Sh. Lockyer observes: „A further criticism of textual analysis is that it is conducted in isolation – the text is all that matters, and it is the central, or the only, focus of analysis. This self-contained approach to analysis neglects the importance of the producer and reader in the construction of meaning. Combining textual analysis with methods that explore the institutional constraints on the production of the text (such as in-depth interviews or participant observation) and how audiences read the text (focus groups and in-depth interviews) prevents the risk textualizing the world – perceiving the world specifically in terms of texts – and acknowledges the world that exists outside of texts“ (Lockyer, 2008, p. 866).

It should be noted that GEM biographies not only reflect the biographies of the narrators and the way they reconstruct them, but also those who have gathered the narratives have left a very strong mark on those biographies by editing them in order to make them more reader-friendly and suitable for a popular website. Thus, GEM biographies cannot be treated as neutrally gathered and presented transcripts of autobiographical reconstruction. Thus, it would be also interesting to research only just the biographies presented on the GEM website, but also the researchers (participating in the project) themselves or even conduct another study by the researchers already involved in producing the biographies, who could dig deeper and conduct biographical research beyond qualitative content analysis.

As L. M. Baker remarks: „In case studies where the emphasis is on gaining a good understanding of phenomena within a particular setting, there is a good marriage between obtrusive (e.g., interviews or overt observation) and unobtrusive methods“ (Baker, 2008, p. 904). Therefore, in the case of GEM biographies such marriage between obtrusive and unobtrusive methods 1. has already been made (by the researchers who produced the biographies) 2. could provide an interesting perspective through the study of the researchers of the GEM project (for instance: interviews with them) or additional

study by the researchers of the GEM project (combining biographical research with qualitative content analysis). As Ph. Mayring further remarks: „qualitative content analysis can be combined with other qualitative procedures. The research question and the characteristics of the material should have the priority in the decision about adapted methods“ (Mayring, 2000, p. 8).

There are also possibilities which lie in the textual analysis itself: „Meaning is derived from the codes, conventions, and genre of the text and its social, cultural, historical, and ideological context — which can work together to convey a preferred reading of the text. Some textual analyses examine the interconnections of meanings both inside and outside the text. Thus, questions asked during textual analysis refer to the rhetorical context of the text (Who created the text? What are the authors' intentions? Who is the intended audience?), the specific textual characteristics (What topic or issue is being addressed? How is the audience addressed? What is the central theme or claim made? Is there evidence or explanation to support the theme or claim? What is the nature of this evidence or explanation?), and the wider context of the text (How does the text relate to other texts in the same genre or format?)“ (Lockyer, 2008, p. 865). Thus, such questions can be asked by the researchers: who, how and why presents the GEM biographies the way they are presented. The study would then thoroughly analyse the latent meaning of the GEM biographies as well as the broader social context of the project itself.

CONCLUSIONS

There are four ways of using GEM biographies in research:

1. For researchers involved in the project and in the production of the biographies: they can be used as basis of biographical research (as they can reach the people whose educational biographies were presented);
2. For researchers outside of the project who were not involved in producing the biographies: using the biographies posted on-line for content analysis (rather qualitative, given the number of biographies);
3. For researchers outside of the project who were not involved in producing the biographies: using the biographies posted on-line for biographical research (with content analysis as supportive technique);
4. For researchers outside of the project who were not involved in producing the biographies: using the biographies posted on-line for biographical research with the researchers and participants of the project as the subject of the research.

In this case the sole use of qualitative content analysis seems to be the most limited.

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THE EDUCATION PATHS OF EUROPEAN SENIORS – THE RESULTS OF BIOGRAPHY RESEARCH CARRIED OUT UNDER THE INTER-GENERATIONAL EUROPEAN MEMORIES PROJECT

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY GROUP

In the inter-Generational European Memorize project. Research was conducted concerning the educational paths of older people. For this reason the biographical method was used. During biographical workshops, seniors created their own biography about their educational experiences. All biographies were then placed on the web page „The Little book of memory”. The authors who analysed the biographies are from six different European countries (Austria, France, Italy, Poland, Spain and Turkey). In all, three biographies from Austria were analysed, five from France, five Italy, five from Spain and six from Poland. The authors of the biographies were elderly - ranging from 51 to 86 years. The study involved 13 women, 13 men and 3 people did not give their personal data.

Authors had freedom in creating their educational biography, therefore a qualitative difference between individual biographies is seen. It should be noted that biography workshops were conducted differently in individual countries. In some organizations, the topic of education given to all the workshops, while in other organizations, education was only one aspect covered in the workshop. This could explain the different approaches to educational biography and their differing forms. It should be noted also that not all organizations participating in the project worked only with seniors. Moreover, the partners in varying degrees were involved in the preparation of workshops and had varying degrees of competence in this area. All these factors could have an impact on the quality of biography.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The biographies generated by the project were subjected to qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis can be defined as the description of a level of communication in a given topic, an attempt to find its meaning and interpretation of the transmitted messages. Marilyn Lichtman distinguished six steps of data analyses (2010, pp.198-203):

- Initial coding. Going from the responses to some central idea of responses;
- Revisiting initial coding;
- Developing an initial list of categories or central ideas;
- Modifying initial list based on additional rereading;
- Revising categories and subcategories
- Moving from categories to concepts.

In this study, an open and selective coding was used. The first step in the analysis was to read the empirical material (biographies) and its relation to the distinguished initial categories. It should be noted that two researchers independently singled categories based on the content. Afterwards, researchers compared the categories with each other and identified common categories. The next step was to identify the dependencies between categories (Plan 1).

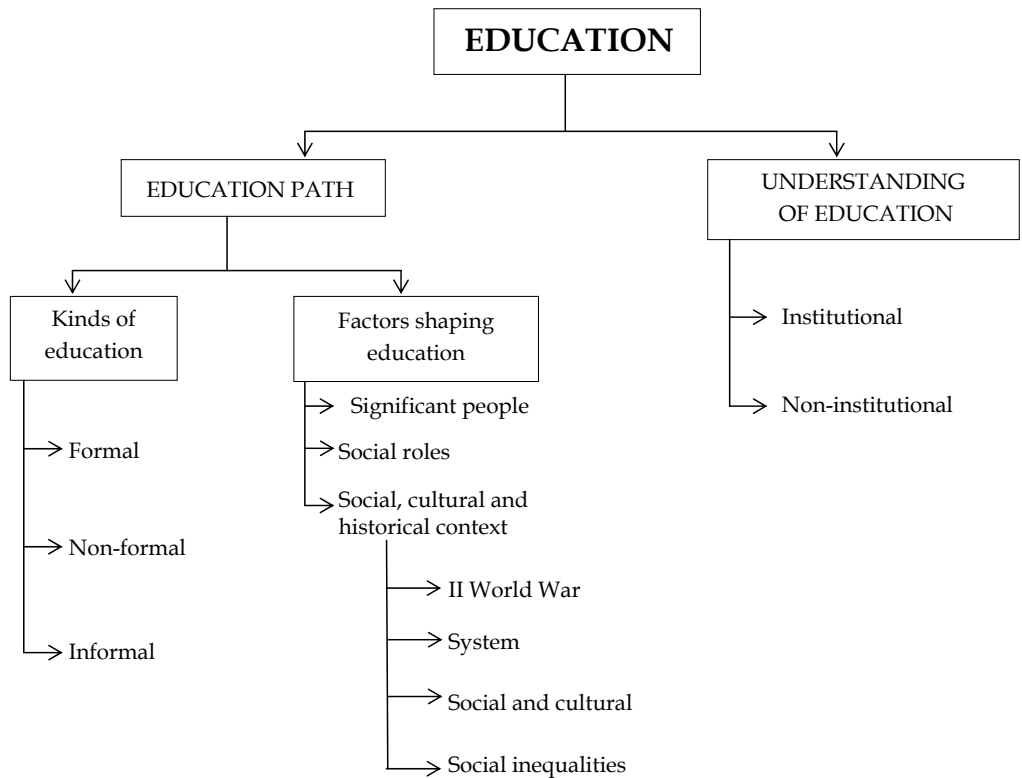
The indication of the relationship between the categories allowed differentiation between categories of higher and lower order (categories and sub-categories). It should be noted that two threads concerning education appeared in the biographies: the understanding of education by the narrators, and a description of their educational path. Education paths and the understanding of education are therefore the main categories. Moreover, two sub-categories were assigned to the „education path“ category: one of them about the types of education which appeared in the material (formal, non-formal and informal education), and the other about the factors which shaped the education path. In connection with this, these categories had determined three thematic areas within which biographies were analyzed.

In sum, analyzing biographies focused on:

- How did the narrators understand education?
- What are formal, non-formal and informal education like?
- What factors had shaped the education path of narrators?

Plan 1.

Dependence between categories

*Note.* Authors**UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATION**

The narrators understand education as formal and informal learning. Some people interpreted education as an activity involving the acquisition of knowledge that takes place in schools. This kind of understanding of education was typical for Polish biographies, but it also appeared in biographies from Italy, Austria and Turkey. However, although the respondents indicated more often that education is learning in schools, they also recognized the educational potential of everyday life experiences and interpersonal contacts. Respondents recognize education variously, principally as:

- **a means of living in society** - as exemplified by the expression of Fernando from Spain: „(...) the way in which a person is treated and formed, for the good use of conscience and ways of handling it in a social setting”.
- **learning about other people** - (...) „It is also a way to learn how to respect the other” - Jean-Pierre from France.
- **the process of shaping people** - „Education, for me, must lead to autonomy, empathy and respect. To have a critical sense is also very important. General culture comes after (...)” - JM from France. Another very interesting opinion is from Güler from Turkey: *„Education is the process which helps people live as people really should live, and which helps people to affect each other by means of moral and traditional values”*.
- **the transfer of knowledge and values** - (...) „I think that education is something that goes from parents to children like knowledge, values, customs, etc.” - Susan from Spain.
- **a process of learning to be a part of society** - “For me it is an essential way to integrate the surrounding society from a very early age. Education enables one to be an individual who is not excluded from society, and to have points in common with all the other persons who you meet throughout your professional and personal life. It helps us to understand each other, and to communicate between different cultures. The most important thing for me is that education enables social inclusion” - opinion of Francis from France. Sabino from France had similar view: „Education permits a common basis of general knowledge for everybody and educated persons become responsible people who are integrated in the surrounding society, and who appreciate democracy and respect nature and other people”.
- **a possibility to change ones’ life** - „Education is a start to life, an escape from ignorance and an uprising to darkness” - Mehmet from Turkey.

It should be noted that for each person education has a very significant value. Narrators understand education as a process which is very important for man, a process which develops and improves people. Education is a window on the world which builds the true man. In many biographies, education is understood as a lifelong process, exemplified by this statement: „(...) Education is a start to life, an escape from ignorance and an uprising to darkness” - Mehmet from Turkey. A similar opinion is expressed by Ifran: “It is a matter of fact which shapes the way of life and future of a person from birth to death”.

To sum up, education is understood as a process of knowledge acquisition which takes place in school. However, the narrators also recognize the educational potential of everyday experiences, and interpersonal contacts. It can be concluded that older people understand education as an institutional or non-institutional process. The authors propose this typology because in this regard there was no elements of non-

formal education (seminaries, courses, postgraduates, etc.) in the biographies. There is no difference in the meaning of education in individual countries. What is important is that education is a very important part of human life for all the narrators.

THE EDUCATION PATHS OF SENIORS - FORMAL EDUCATION

Based on Phillip Hall Coombs' typology of the forms of education, researchers distinguished elements of formal, non-formal and informal education from the narratives of the analyzed biographies (Jarvis, 2004, pp.40-41). The use of the typology of P. H. Coombs allows us to show the education process of the narrators and to compare biographies. It should be noted that there was an important aspect in biographies in the context of the educational path: the factors which shaped education. Therefore, this issue will be also presented.

The formal education of students varies because it ranges from no formal education to a high academic education (e. g. doctoral studies, doctorate). Not all of the respondents wrote directly about their formal education, although most of them did. Frequent appearances of references to received education testify to the fact that people equate education with school (institutions). It may be noticed that people who have received higher education often exhibit formal education in their biographies. A good education is identified by respondents as positive, and as a reason to be proud. Interestingly, people who have lower education, or for various reasons had to discontinue their education, try „to explain“ in various ways at the outset of narrative why they have not acquired education, as shown by the example of Antonio from Spain: (...) I was born in Florence in 1950 to a family of small farmers. I really wanted to study but my parents could not keep us all, so they sent me to work at the age of 14 years to their cousin, who lived in Cologne, Germany, and opened a restaurant“.

Another example is narrative of Cengzin from Turkey:

„I'm a graduate of primary school. I can't forget how I started to use a pencil and dictate the first letters ABC for the first time. As I could not have more than primary school education, the moments I had during those five years will never be forgotten“.

It may be noted that people who did not have higher education often omitted this aspect of present focusing on education. The biographies analysed showed that four people indicated they had no formal education, two people had received a basic education, five had received secondary or vocational, and as many as thirteen people had received higher education, including two people with a Ph.D. Thus, most of the people involved in the study had received higher education. Such a high proportion of people with higher education can be explained by the fact that the desire to participate in education late in adulthood is related to their previous experiences. It can be presumed that if someone was educationally active throughout their life, they also need to learn in late adulthood. It can therefore be assumed that there were seniors in the study who were active educationally all life, hence the large representation of people with higher education. People who throughout their lives showed little interest in learning will not need to participate in the educational activity even during old age. Given that participation in the study was completely voluntary, it is difficult to indicate the reason for this state of affairs. It can be concluded, on the basis of the analyzed biographies, that there are no substantial differences in the course of formal education of respondents in each country.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

In their biographies, seniors paid the least attention to non-formal education. This type of education appeared in the biographies only when the researcher asked them directly to describe this form of education. In other cases, non-formal education was identified with formal education, therefore institutional education. This points to the fact that people distinguish education as either institutional (school), which includes formal education and non-formal, and non-institutional education, which includes informal education. Many respondents, however, drew attention to the elements of non-formal education - such as courses and training - in their biographies.

Most often non-formal education included:

- Vocational training developing the skills and competencies necessary for professional activity;
- Courses not related to work, developing cognitive needs and interests of seniors: most often there were ITC and language courses, but also related to culture and the arts, such as choirs, singing, playing instruments, poetry, theatre, dance and physical activity.

Seniors recognize the need to learn foreign languages and new technologies, as a „window on the world“. Interestingly, the biographies show that during the period of professional activity the narrators focused on improving skills and professional competence. Old age turns out to be the time in which a person has the opportunity to develop their own previously unsatisfied ambitions and needs and the discovery of a whole new interest. An example of this is the biography of Krystyna from Poland:

„(...) My daughters have less and less time for me, absorbed in acquiring knowledge, career and setting up their own families. So, I decided to take advantage of the offer and I enrolled at the University of the Third Age in Lubin. Initially I had some fear that I could not handle it, and everybody would think that I'm stupid because I thought that there would only be people with a much higher education than mine. It turned out, however, that it is a pleasant place for any senior. It is place which will expand one's horizons. Moreover, it is a place where I can meet people of my own age, with similar interests and similar concerns. The most important for me was to gain knowledge in the use of computers and the Internet. The beginnings were difficult. I couldn't understand what was explained to me at all, and the sum of my knowledge was how to turn the computer on. (...) Step by step, I was learning use the computer. And now I know that new technologies are a wonderful thing, useful and accessible, not only for the younger generations“.

Similarly, other seniors appreciated the opportunity to participate in various courses in retirement, represented by biographies from Turkey:

„I have taken part in many courses related to my profession, mostly military courses. But after I retired I have taken part in folk dance and ITC courses mostly as social activities. I don't like spending time in cafes and wasting just playing cards or chatting“ (Ifiran) and the story of Cengiz:

„I'm still a graduate of primary school. I could not find the time and chance of completing any more formal education. But ITC courses were the start of my making up my mind to go into society. Being a shy person I used to hide myself,

but after that I started to come out of my little world thinking that there was a huge world outside and it was waiting for me”.

The opportunity to participate in education during old age is important for the narrators, particularly as seniors indicate that only during this period can they pursue their interests and passions, for which they did not have time before. In this context, the importance of institutions such as the University of the Third Age should be noted, which offer rich educational opportunities for this age group. The keen interest older people take in new technologies and foreign languages points to the fact that people realize that these skills are necessary in the information society. Willingness to learn these skills by senior citizens reduces the risk of social marginalization.

INFORMAL EDUCATION

Informal education is often portrayed in the biographies as the greatest source of knowledge. Learning from life, from everyday experience and from other significant people imparts the greatest influence on narrators. In the area of non-formal education, there are two types of learning:

- learning from everyday life - through reflection and analysis of the experience, it is also tacit knowledge;
- self-study – conscious learning, but not held in educational institutions.

In regard to the first aspect, seniors believed that critical events, such as death of a loved one, raising a family and birth baby had education potential. This example is the story of Marysia from Poland:

„(...) for the first time when I had a baby and I had to learn to live alone with a small person. It is not taught at school. You can know how to take care of the child, but to be in harmony with the baby you need to learn. (...) It was hard, but now I know that the best school is life”.

The educational potential of life is also shown by Janka from Poland:

„I have wonderful grandchildren and a wonderful family (...) my husband showed me that you don't need much to be happy. Shared work and dedication can lead to happiness. For shared happiness”.

Creating a new social role had an educational potential also for Fernando from Spain: „Marriage has been a good teacher. And having my four kids. Three boys and a beautiful girl. You realize there is not much engineering in those situations (...)”.

Another aspect which was recognized by seniors as educational was travelling. Travelling as a potential for learning appeared in many biographies. This example is a reflection of Marysia from Poland: „For me other people and other cultures are the most interesting. I think that getting to know other countries can teach us a lot (...). Travelling teaches about life, self-reliance”.

Similar opinion presented Krystyna (Poland): „There is a saying – “travel educates”. During trips both abroad and in my own country I have learned a lot of interesting things, visited beautiful places and broadened my knowledge. While travelling I met other people, other cultures, and a little history of the places which I visited”.

It is also worth citing statement of Hertha from Austria: „For many years I have been working all over the world and got to know approx. 20 languages. Another important example is the story of Maria from Poland: Living among Germans during the war I learnt to speak German.. However, without further study it is gone. Today, I can say only a few phrases. It's a shame, after all languages open up horizons”.

In turn, self-education refers to learning in the workplace: „Probably the best experience I had was working with the kids in the high school”(Betty from France) or story of Ryszard from Poland: “My father was a carpenter. Initially I was fractious, I preferred to play. Then observing him I learned the trade. It was the same with plumbing, I wanted to do a bathroom in his house, so I had observed plumbers working in the palace in Gronowicach, because that's where I lived after my wedding. I had no money to hire a plumber, so I had to do it myself. And so by observation I learned to be a plumber. Those abilities allowed me to maintain my large family, a wife and six children”.

Another dimension of education relates to self-study from books or the internet. Krystyna from Poland in her biography had presented this form education: „(...)My education was started again when I wanted to learn English. I asked my daughters to teach me basic words in English and give me a few English lessons. Later, I found an old English book which my daughter used at school and step by step I learned the names of colours and simple sentences which now for children in nursery are very easy. I told nobody about my progress in English education because I was afraid that I would not be accepted and that people would laugh at me and ask me: why do you do it?”

In short, elements typical of formal, informal and non-formal education appeared in all the biographies analysed. The relations of the narrators show that informal education has the most educational potential. In this aspect researchers distinguished learning from every day, the educational potential of experiences and the creation of a new role in society. Another aspect of informal education is self-education. However, all participants pointed out that „life is the best school”, which reflects how important informal education is. Formal education is also important for the narrators because most of them think that graduating from school is a cause for pride. Less attention has been paid to non-formal education in the narratives. The reason is probably the fact that seniors equate non-formal education with formal. It is the same situation as in the case of understanding of education where non-formal education does not appear. However, regardless of the type of education, in all analysed biographies the narrators believed that education is very important aspect of life which shapes the fate of seniors and has an influence on character.

FACTORS SHAPING THE EDUCATIONAL PATH

In many of the respondents biographies the educational path is complicated, shaped by different kinds of life situations and social issues. Family had big impact on the development of formal education. Interestingly, in many cases, the parents did not help in education - totally different than in modern times. It happened that education was taken in spite of the family, as in the case of Maria of Poland, whose family did not want to agree to her further education. The family preferred Maria to go to work at once. However, the headmaster had talked to her parents and they agreed to let

Maria continue further education, therefore she became a teacher. Another example is story of Kazimiera from Poland: „I'm 70 and I live in a small village, located a few miles away from my hometown. I finished 8 classes in a public school, after which I planned to go to high school. I had many a discussion with my parents, because I came from a farm and my parents wanted me to stay at home and help them and my two older sisters. I had my dreams, however, to become a teacher. Therefore, unknown to my parents, I was spending my free time in the attic reading books. In this way I prepared myself for the exam and I passed it”.

The educational fates of the respondents were often multifaceted. Their education was often different to that which they planned. An interesting example is the educational path of Elisabeth from Austria, who had to fight the system to be able to finish her doctorate:

„My personal situation on the labour market between 1983 – 2010: First of all I want to say that the collection of abilities, inclinations and talents (read: informal potential) on the administrative machinery (read: here AMS) is hard, if not impossible. This fact also influenced my personal employment situation so that for years I was without paid work, ie was unemployed and had to deal with the AMS in Austria („Arbeitsmarktservice” – the AMS pays unemployment money and tries to find jobs for unemployed people), which in turn resulted in many experiences, some of which I describe here: The early 90s for example: the AMS wanted me to either withdraw from the University of Vienna (enough to support formal education) or to get no money. Although I have a university degree (read: Master of Arts) and had only been enrolled for achieving the doctoral degree at the University of Vienna – I only had to write my thesis – and was able to start each job offered... But it did not help, either de-registration and money (read: „Notstandshilfe” – money for long time unemployed people) – or continue enrolment and no money and no insurance from the AMS. I could not decide to stop studying, although I lived with my 4-5 year-old daughter alone in Austria. My conclusion was: „Do you want to produce idiots?” I fell through the floor – no money, no insurance (partly private loans from friends) – loss of my apartment, etc., etc. I just could not „deregister” – because to me this polarity: either money or education in the depths was ridiculous. The idea that an unemployed person could indeed go to the nearest pub to get drunk paying with the unemployment money from the state, but is not allowed to continue her education was so horrendously distasteful that I simply could not take this pact – but continued to fight through the courts for my rights. Although I was largely on leave from my studies – but never expelled to this day. After 4 long years (with a child 10 years of age) – I received a letter from a high court – I had already somehow forgotten about this trial – which said that it was decided that I was 100 percent right, the employment office then had to pay me 4 long years of unemployment money, moreover they had to pay extra support, including health insurance. There was talk of a mistake on the part of the AMS. That was very nice and I hope that this case helped others to get their right for education when not having a job”.

This quote from the biography reveals how important education can be for a person, and how much a person is able to do to get an education. On the other hand, it is shown as an obstacle which must be overcome in order to climb the ladder of education. Problems with system also appeared in the biography of Hertha, also from Austria: „The insurance system for self-employment in Austria is the worst we have, but it is compulsory. Highest deductions, less outcome for the insured and lots of bullying. Working at the age of 50 is as hard as it was 30 years ago”.

Another social context which appeared in the biographies are social inequalities-unequal access to education. An example which illustrates the problem of access to education is the story of Hertha from Austria: "School was only for the children of rich people. I dared to break that rule. I was treated like garbage at High School and thus I went back to Secondary Modern School, completed Handelsschule with distinction".

The biography of Antonio (Italy) also presents access to schools: „I was born in Florence in 1950 to a family of small farmers. I really wanted to study but my parents could not keep us all so they sent me to work at the age of 14 years for their cousin, who lived in Cologne, Germany, and opened a restaurant".

Another story which shows how the educational path was changed under different circumstances of life is the story of Agostino from Italy: „I attended the High School in Oristano and then I joined the University of Cagliari before the Faculty of Law and Letters then. Since I am a resourceful person in the same years at the University I applied for the 28th Course Reserve officer, and in the same year I was a substitute teacher letters of the 3rd Media – the State School of Tortoli in the detached section of fleecy. The school year ended brilliantly and the headmaster asked me to continue a career as a professor, but in August of 1960 I was sent to Pius Cesano di Roma and Lecce 28 CAUC and decided to continue a career in the army".

The biography of Barbara from Poland is also interesting in this aspect: „After completing primary school, I began teaching in Vocational Textile School, where I held practice in the Department of textile, but only for 1 year. In second grade I moved to High School in Nowa Ruda and attended the evening classes. I passed the high school diploma. A few years later I went to the annual accounting course in Marcinowice. However, shortly after completing it, I got married and got pregnant".

This biography is one of many examples which show that women often had to interrupt or change their formal education by entering into new social roles (wife, mother, caring sister). While the biographies of men show that creating social roles was not relevant to educational paths, this was related rather to their decisions in life (going abroad), or new employment opportunities. Moreover, narrators point out that following education often forced a re-organization of life. Respondents acquired education in both the evening and study.

The social context that influenced the fate of education of the respondents is visible in many biographies. In Polish biographies, the most evident is the context of World War II and hardship associated with war. The war resulted in the interruption of education. Moreover, after the war people were engaged in rebuilding country, and consequently had no time for education. People's education was limited to various evening and weekend courses. The biography of a Polish soldier presented the impact of war on education: „I belong to a generation that survived World War II, although I have to say that neither before the war, nor after did I have an easy life. It was a very turbulent time, nothing was certain. At any moment the world could turn over upside down and we had to cope with this in some way and adapt to it - it was a condition of survival. How was my education? Hmm - It didn't have much impact on my educational path (...)".

The biography of Maria from Poland also presented the impact of war on education: „During the war, I did not go to school, there were no such opportunities for Polish children. However, there was an educated Polish officer among the workers, who came in the evening after work to my parents and me and three other children, and taught us the alphabet, as well as reading and writing".

The research group is unique, because most people have graduated from education - despite the adversities of war, post war inequality, or the resistance of parents.

It should be noted that the educational paths of the narrators were very different, affected by many factors which changed their education. Social, historical context and another factors which influenced on education are visible in the biographies. Summing up, factors shaping formal education appeared, such as:

- significant people: family, teacher, headmaster etc.;
- creating a new social role: this factor is especially significant in the case of women;
- a new perspective in life: new job, working abroad, change of residence;
- failure of the education system;
- social inequalities;
- social, cultural and historical context: World War II, famine after war, natural disasters etc.

The biographies show that their education took place in different ways, and it was rarely implemented in accordance with their plans. Often, the educational path were changed under the influence of external factors, as was seen in the analysed biographies.

It is worth noting that in all the biographies the respondents appreciated the value of education. Many of them showed a special determination to acquire further education degrees, actively resisting adversity or overcoming the objections from the family. In terms of motivation, there is no significant difference between the biographies according to country.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the biographies that were created as part of the GEM project allows us to draw some conclusions about the education of older people in Europe. The most important conclusion is that there is no significant difference in the educational paths of seniors and their understanding of education.

Education is understood by senior as a process of learning which take place within schools or as a process of learning from everyday life. Therefore, education is interpreted as formal or informal learning. However, many seniors believed that education is both formal and informal learning.

With regard to the educational path, elements of formal, non-formal and informal education appeared in each biography. Participants focused mostly on formal and informal education. Seniors stressed the importance of formal education - getting a good education is equated with success in life. However, seniors also pointed out that everyday life experiences have a great educational potential. People learnt much useful information from everyday life, and developed the necessary abilities and skills. Non-formal education was understand as education for work or as a form self-development. However, the best time to develop one's interests, skills and passions is in older age.

Social and historical contexts also appeared in the biographies. These contexts refer to: World War II, famine, social inequalities, floods, creating new social roles, and the educational system. The importance of education of the respondents had their origin in the family attitude towards learning.

REFLECTIONS OF RESEARCHERS ON THE RESEARCH REALISED WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE *inter-Generational European Memories* PROJECT

It should be noted that research under the GEM project was very specific, because of the methods of conducting workshops and data collection. This research resulted from the efforts and engagement of people from six different European countries, who were aware of the possibilities and limitation of the study. Due to the specific nature of this research, the strong and weak points should be noticed.

One weak point of the research was the fact that the biographical workshops were conducted by different people (trainers). It should be noted that during the first partner meeting, a course on the biographical method was conducted, but no one person was appointed to supervise all biographical workshops. This fact may have influenced the way in which individual workshops were conducted. Moreover, each organization involved in the project had flexibility in the selection of topics and methods.

Another weak point was the varying quality of biographies. Some biographies were long, and dealt exhaustively with a given topic, while others were limited to a short question and answer. This made any deep analysis related to the education of the seniors involved in the project impossible. On the other hand, the quality of the biographies may have been result of a variety of trainers and methods in conducting workshops. However, the quality of biographies may also provide information about the participants.

Despite these limitations, the project had some strong points. One was the fact that many different countries took part in the organization of the project, allowing the comparison of the educational paths of seniors from different parts of Europe.

Another strong point was that all the organizational partners involved in the project were experienced in adult education, so working with seniors and conducting biography workshops was not a problem for them. The project also provided an opportunity to share experiences in the area of adult education. It should be mentioned that two of the partners are research universities, and their methodology was valuable in carrying out this research.

The research results are not perfect, but we are aware of that. Despite these imperfections, we believe that the results of this research make an important contribution to the subject of education, and should provide a stimulus for further research. The strong and weak and points of this research will provide clues for others in planning their research.

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