

SOCIAL POTENTIAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHERS OF THE THIRD AGE: PROBLEMS AND NEW CHALLENGES

Elena Shuklina¹, Mariya Pevnaya²

¹Elena Shuklina, (Prof. Dr.) The School of public administration and entrepreneurship Institute of Economics and management, Ural Federal University, RUSSIA, e.a.shuklina@urfu.ru

²Maria Pevnaya, (Dr.) head of Chair of sociology and public administration technology, Ural Federal University, RUSSIA, m.v.pevnaya@urfu.ru

Abstract

Introduction

Russian teachers of the third age are a social group that is currently in a difficult and ambiguous situation. On the one hand, raising the retirement age in Russia sets them the task of further professional development. On the other hand, the level of professional requirements associated with increasing the competitiveness of Russian higher education in the global educational space is sharply increasing. The purpose of the article is to answer the question - how the accumulated social potential of the third age's teachers allows them to adapt to new conditions, to increase the level of competitiveness, to act as a factor in the development of the University teaching community and higher education in general.

Materials and methods

The article is based on the materials of research team in the Ural Federal University (2017-2019). The article uses quantitative data of the mass survey of teachers in the Ural Federal district, implemented by the method of questioning. The population is 51 University of the Ural Federal district. Quota sampling was implemented in the study. The volume of the teachers' sample is 810 people. Social community of the third age's teachers was 38.5% of the total sample.

The results of research

The social potential of University teachers was considered in the context of the following structural elements: professional qualification, innovation, cultural, civil. Teachers of the third age have higher professional and qualification potential (qualification and status characteristics) than other age groups. The innovative potential realized in research activity and educational process is also high. This applies to innovation activity implemented in research projects and scientific communication. Their cultural practices are quite diverse, and the activity of cultural consumption is even higher than that of colleagues of other age groups. Civic activity of the third age's teachers is manifested in various forms of public participation, implemented through interaction with authorities of different levels and public organizations. The specificity of their civic activity is the implementation of expert functions that require high qualification, which has this group of teachers. At the same time, the teaching community of the third age notes the lack of sufficient institutional conditions for effective development, manifested primarily in the low level of social protection in the professional sphere.

General conclusions

University teachers of the third age have sufficient adaptive potential in the new challenges of the social environment. At the same time, the basic problem of their development is the creation of institutional conditions for professional activities and the effective realization of their social potential.

Keywords: Educational reforms, university teachers, teaching community, public participation, higher education, third age

1 INTRODUCTION

Russian teachers of the third age are a social group that is currently in a difficult and controversial situation. Raising of the retirement age in Russia increased the time distance of their stay in the profession. At the same time, the level of professional requirements has grown significantly due to increased competition in the university environment. The tasks of increasing the competitiveness of Russian higher education in the global educational space have formed new criteria for assessing teachers' activities and have actualized the problem of adaptation of third-aged teachers to new challenges, their readiness for active professional development.

The purpose of the article is to answer the question of how much the accumulated social potential of third-aged teachers allows them to adapt to new conditions, increase competitiveness, and act as a factor in the university pedagogical community and higher education in general.

In the course of the study, we addressed the problem of the relationship between the challenges of the future and the potential for the development of higher education in Russia, which is disclosed in relevant and critical articles by R. R. Vakhitov, Ya. I. Kuzminov, D. N. Peskov, (Vakhitov, 2017, p 14-23, Kuzminov and Peskov, 2017, p 202-233). For our work, important is the analysis of changes that the strategies of the universities' pedagogical community undergo in the process of reforming education, changing forms of work organization, increasing the bureaucratization of the educational process and managerial activities, carried out by R. N. Abramov, I. A. Gruzdev, E. S. Kagan, M. V. Kurbatova, E. A. Terentyev (Abramov, Gruzdev, Terentyev, 2016, p. 62-70).

Modern studies of the potential of aging workers, implemented by Borman W. C., Hedge J. W. (Borman, Hedge, 2015) have allowed us to highlight its characteristics and also, following Bal P. M., Kooij D. T.A.M, Rousseau D. M., to consider stereotypical ideas about workers near retirement and retirement age, such as "resistance to change, low ability to learn, shorter tenure, etc." (Bal, Kooij, Rousseau, 2015). We saw that these stereotypes regarding older workers correlate with social dysfunctions of aging processes and those discriminatory practices applied to older age groups of the population that are widespread today in the labor sphere of both modern Russia and foreign countries (Klepikova, Kolosnitsyna, 2017, p. 69-88, Liu Sze, Kawachi, 2017, p. 220-230; Fisher, Truxillo, Finkelstein, 2017, p. 316-327).

We addressed studies of the impact of the work of university professors of pre-retirement and retirement age on the development of the university community in general and on the formation of academic leadership in the university environment (Evans, 2017). We consider important the idea of a number of researchers about the fact that academic leadership is formed through the successful interaction of teachers of different age groups, mentoring seniors (Weijden, Belder, Arensbergen, Besselaar, 2015), their ability to transmit university culture to young people through immersion in the academic environment.

We also took into account new methodological approaches to the construction of a social community of the third age, including the development of problems of its human and social capital, lifestyle, employment and leisure activities, considered in the works of E. N. Uteeva, I.A. Shmerlina (Uteeva, 2009, p. 168-175; Shmerlina, 2014, p. 190-198).

2 DATA AND METHODS

The article is based on the materials from research projects of the scientific team of the Ural Federal University 2017-2019. It uses quantitative data obtained by a mass survey of teachers from the Ural Federal District (Ural Federal District), implemented by the questionnaire method. The total population was 51 universities of the Ural Federal District. The study implemented quota sampling. The sample population of teachers is 810 people. The social community of teachers of the third age amounted to 38.5% of the total sample population.

Let us present some statistical data characterizing the age group of the third-aged teachers in Russian higher education. The development of higher education over the past decade has been accompanied by a dynamic decline in the number of faculty members. Compared to 2010, the number of employees of higher education in general decreased by 24%, and the number of professional teaching staff - by 27%. At the same time, the teaching staff is structurally changing in the direction of the quantitative growth of teaching staff older than 55 years, gradually slowly "aging" (see table 1).

Table 1. The number of faculty members engaged in educational programs of higher education (bachelor, specialty, graduate programs)

	Total employees of higher education (thousand people)	Total faculty (thousand people)	Faculty members over 55, in %
2010/2011	903,4	356,8	-
2011/2012	886,2	348,2	-
2012/2013	880,2	342,0	36,7
2013/2014	824,0	319,3	37,5
2014/2015	779,4	299,8	37,9
2015/2016	724,5	279,8	38,5
2016/2017	673,8	261,0	38,5

Calculation is based on: Education indicators: 2018: statistical compilation / N.V. Bondarenko, L.M. Gokhberg, N.V. Kovaleva and others; National researcher University "Higher School of Economics". Moscow: HSE, 2018.S. 254, 270

Quantitatively, the teaching staff is 261,000 people. The size of the age group over 55 years is 100 746 people. In the structure of the number of faculty members, differentiated by age and job title, representatives of the older age group (over 55) have a higher status and dominate primarily among

- Professors (77,7%),
- Heads of departments (56,0%),
- Directors of institutes (47,5%),
- Deans (41,7%).

Statistical trends characterizing the quantitative changes occurring in this subgroup of the professional community need further substantive analysis related to the actualization of the problem of the social potential of aging professional staff to the realities of the new time.

3 RESULTS

In the study, the social potential of university teachers was considered in the context of the following structural elements: vocational qualification; innovative; cultural; civilian. We proceeded from the research position that the innovative activity of third-aged teachers in various fields is an indicator of the effectiveness of their social capital implementation. During the study, we identified blocks of indicators characterizing the innovative activity of teachers in the fields of professional activity (research, pedagogical, publication, expert advisory); continuing education (professional and general development); free time and intellectual leisure; civic initiatives and public forms of activity. It was important for us to find the answer to the following research question: how capable is the aging part of the professional community to implement innovative activity in various types of professional and non-professional activities?

The analysis of the obtained data showed the presence of significant differences in the innovative characteristics of the professional activity of teachers of the third age and other age categories. Teachers of the third age, in comparison with other groups, are more inclined to research activities (43.1% compared with the average for the array as a whole - 31.2%; Pearson Chi-Square = Value 51.169^a, Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) 0.0; Cramer's V=0.203), actively implement research projects both in the university departments and independently, on the informal basis (48.3% compared with the average for the array as a whole - 39.2%; Pearson Chi-Square = Value 51.322^a, Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) 0.0; Cramer's V=0.210) or commissioned by ministries, authorities, government agencies (18.3% compared with the average for the array as a whole - 12.0%; Pearson Chi-Square = Value 57.172^a, Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) 0.0; Cramer's V=0.229). The intensity of their research activities (grant and publication activity, writing articles of the Higher Attestation Commission,

Scopus, WoS) does not weaken (60.3%) in comparison with other age groups, and participation in scientific and practical conferences in other cities and countries even grows (44.0%) (see table 2).

Teachers of the third age, in comparison with colleagues, seriously increase the share of expert professional activity, their membership in public councils, expert groups at the authorities is activated (23.3%), the advisory role in the work of various organizations is growing (24.1%) (see table 2). The basis for this is professional knowledge, experience, established expert positions, as well as higher status and job characteristics, and the availability of degrees and ranks that allow effective fulfillment of these social roles.

In pedagogical practice, in comparison with other age groups, teachers of the third age intensify educational activities in the field of online learning. So, they are twice as active as young people in the development of electronic educational resources (41.4% and 19.6%, respectively) and give lectures online (19.8% and 8.4%, respectively) (see Table 2).

Their assessments of the effectiveness of resources such as e-learning (59.6%), distance education (37.6%), the national platform "Open Education" (30.4%), massive open online courses with interactive participation and the use of e-learning technologies (34.6%) almost completely coincide with the positions of colleagues of other age groups.

Table 2. Innovative characteristics of socio-cultural activities of teachers of the third age (in % of the number of respondents)

Which of the following have you done for the last year?	Age, years			
	> 30	31-40	41-55	<55
Go to the theater, attend creative evenings, exhibitions, concerts	70,1	63,1	67,3	71,6
Write grant applications, research projects, articles (VAK, Scopus, WoS)	61,2	63,1	58,5	60,3
Take part in scientific and practical conferences in other cities, countries	37,4	32,9	34,1	44,0
Develop electronic educational resources	19,6	25,8	29,5	41,4
Receive additional education, complete courses (driving, language, computer, etc.)	45,8	49,2	46,1	39,7
Attend sports sections, fitness centers, pools, exercise outdoors	45,7	42,5	37,3	39,7
Travel independently across Russia	42,1	41,7	39,6	37,9
Realistically, not formally, take professional development courses	24,3	29,4	37,8	32,8
Participate in public educational, cultural projects as a participant, listener or spectator	52,3	32,9	36,9	27,6
Participate in public educational, cultural projects as a lecturer, speaker	30,8	21,8	26,7	26,7
Communicate on social networks with colleagues on education and science	23,7	24,2	25,3	25,0
Participate in the activities of public councils, expert groups under the authorities	7,5	11,9	16,1	23,3
Work as a consultant in other organizations	11,2	13,1	18,4	24,1
Travel independently across other countries	31,8	20,6	21,2	23,2
Give online lectures	8,4	18,3	15,7	19,8
Take part in online educational webinars	16,8	20,0	20,3	11,2

Which of the following have you done for the last year?	Age, years			
	> 30	31-40	41-55	<55
Take part in business seminars, specialized conferences and business forums	15,0	19,4	17,1	17,2
Discuss issues of education and science on social networks with students	24,3	20,6	14,7	8,6
Participate in the activities of socially oriented NGOs	9,3	7,9	5,1	5,2
Participate in rallies and public events at will	8,4	7,5	5,1	3,4
Work as a volunteer	7,5	3,6	3,0	0,9
Learn from MOOCs	5,6	4,4	1,8	0,9
Total	598,6	573,9	577,6	584,5

Teachers of the third age are actively interested in real, not formal, professional development and retraining (32.8%), along with others they take part in online educational webinars (11.2%) business seminars, specialized conferences and business forums (17.2%) (see table 2).

It is interesting that the leisure activities of teachers of the third age are almost no less intense than that of representatives of other age groups: they equally actively attend theaters, art evenings, exhibitions, concerts (71.6%), sports sections, a fitness center, and a swimming pool (39.7%), travel independently in Russia (37.9%) and abroad (23.2%), receive additional education, completing driver, language, computer, etc. courses (39.7%). Their activity is somewhat less manifested in learning on the resources of mass online courses - MOOCs (0.9%) (see Table 3).

The forms of public activity of silver-aged teachers implemented in the form of participation in public educational and cultural projects as lecturers, speakers (26.7%), participants, students or spectators (27.6%) differ a little from other groups. Their communicative interaction in social networks with their colleagues on the problems of education and science is also no less intense (25.0%), although to a lesser extent they are ready to discuss these problems in social networks with their students (8.6%). The civic activity of teachers of the third age in the form of participation in socially oriented NGOs (5.2%), rallies and public events (3.4%), and volunteer activities (0.9%) is less occurred than in answers of other representatives of the professional community.

Thus, we see that under the new challenges of the social environment, university teachers of the third age have sufficient adaptive potential. At the same time, an analysis of the independent assessment by teachers of the third age of their social security in the field of professional activity shows that only one in ten teachers (8.8%) feels fully socially protected when working at a university. 38.9% consider themselves more protected than not; 31.0% - rather unprotected; 15.0% - feel their complete insecurity; 6.3% find it difficult to answer. The social security index in the field of professional activity is differentiated by age groups as follows (*the index is calculated as a conditional average on an ordinal scale, ranging from -1 to +1*):

- 0.05 in the group under 30 years old;
- 0,08 in the group of 31–40 years old;
- 0,04 in the group of 41–55 years old;
- -0,02 in the group over 55 years old;
- 0.05 for the whole array.

This problem is due to the process of expanding precariousness of employment, the spread of unwarranted and unprotected labor relations in the Russian economy in general and in higher education in particular. The scale of precarization of employment is growing, and the negative consequences of instability in the professional sphere primarily affect representatives of the third age. For teachers of higher education, this is

manifested in a reduction in the terms of employment contracts, which is imposed by the employer; the growth of bureaucratization of the educational process; low basic wages; increased level of workload and a sharp increase in labor intensity; involuntary part-time work if necessary, double and triple employment; mass reduction of third-aged teachers who do not meet the new standards of publication activity, the availability of a scientific degree, title, etc. ; the lack of adequate conditions for professional growth and academic inbreeding, etc. [14]. At the moment, all this reduces the quality of employment, increases the level of vulnerability of teachers of the third age, and contributes to the growth of socio-psychological tension in the university environment.

4 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

According to our research, under the new requirements of the social environment, university teachers of the third age have sufficient adaptive potential. Moreover, this social and professional group is an important factor in the development of universities, the formation of a culture of the university environment. At the same time, the teaching community of the third age notes the lack of sufficient institutional conditions for full development, manifested in low level of the social protection in the professional sphere, instability, absence of guarantees, social vulnerability in labor relations.

On the whole, the problem of the social potential of third-aged teachers in Russian higher education in the context of its active reform has not yet received adequate coverage in scientific research. Special studies on the third-aged teachers' precarization of employment is almost completely absent. The limited scientific information on these problems seriously reduces the possibility of making adequate managerial decisions and developing strategies for managing the social potential of higher education teachers, including third-aged teachers, whose presence in the system of higher education is becoming increasingly problematic.

In-depth studies will help to update the positive aspects of precarization associated with increasing the flexibility of labor relations in higher education, opening up the labor market, expanding employment opportunities and professional development of third-aged teachers.

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