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Faculty of Education

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Foreign Language 1

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The Elderly as the Target Group of Institutional Education

Olomouc 2014

Summary

The aim of this presentation is to give an outline of my intended dissertation and of its background context. The dissertation focuses on institutional education of older people in the context of the meaningfulness of life.

One of the most important worldwide trends is societal aging. It refers to the social and demographic processes that result in the aging of a population (Morgan & Kunkel, 2011). For this reason, it is important to pay more attention to the population of the elderly.

People who go into retirement lose their professional role. By losing their profession, the elderly can also lose their social contacts; they can even get into social isolation (Vágnerová, 2007). It can be a cause for the loss of meaning in life in the context of the many changes relating to older age.

Viktor Emanuel Frankl deals with the issue of the meaningfulness of life in his ´logotherapy´ and in his ´existential analysis´. Frankl speaks about ´the will to meaning´ and he also speaks about searching the meaning of life. If people cannot find the meaning of life, they are located in ´an existential vacuum´, which is manifested by a state of boredom (Frankl, 1994). It is important to teach the older people to be as active and involved as possible to achieve maximum pleasure from their lives (Markus, 2000). One of the ways to meaningfully and actively spend their leisure time is to participate in institutional education.

The contemporary society could be characterized as a learning society. This means that people learn all their life. It changes their knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, emotions, and their senses (Jarvis, 2012). Education of the elderly has many positive aspects for the participants (Petřková & Čornaničová, 2004). However, the question is whether the elderly who participate in institutional education really feel that their life is more meaningful than the life of those who do not participate in institutional education.

The main aim of my dissertation is the comparison of two groups of the elderly – those who undergo institutional education and those who do not participate in institutional education.

The contribution of this dissertation will be the comparison of certain facts relating to the elderly participating in institutional education and to those who do not undergo further education, focusing primarily on the meaningfulness of their lives. Another enriching contribution will be the emphasis laid on the psychological aspects in the theory of education for the elderly. Another significant fact will be the analysis of the ´educational needs´ – the interests – of the elderly, including the possibilities of using the results of my research in practice (the enrichment of educational programs in practice). I will propose methods that could be used to encourage the elderly to participate in the institutional education intended for them.

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