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Ganymed

GERAGOGY AND YOUNG MEDIA

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Scientific state of the art in geragogy

Needs and requirements

Consortium of partners



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1. Learning in old age - Geragogical basics

1.1. What is geragogy?

Geragogy is a scientific discipline that deals with education in old age and for aging. It is concerned with the design of learning and educational processes and social participation of the elderly.

On the one hand, geragogy asks about specific learning content and goals from the perspective and embedded within the interest of adults aged 70 and above, on the other hand, it examines how these learning processes can be designed in a meaningful and appropriate way.

It takes into account the different educational biographies and learning challenges that aging entails (Bubolz-Lutz et al. 2010).

1.2. Specific learning needs in old age

1.2.1. How do elderly and old people learn?

Older people aged 70+ mostly no longer need to learn for a degree or for career advancement; instead, they have intrinsic motivation to learn what they genuinely enjoy. With regard to learning, a great deal changes at the motivational level in particular. Learning in old age involves changes in cognitive, sensory as well as motivational aspects. There are large inter-individual differences. On the one hand, the abilities concerning speed (reaction ability, information processing), accuracy, and coordination (tuning motor skills) decrease. On the other hand, there are gains in acquired knowledge, language skills, and experiential knowledge (Baltes, 1990; Behrendt and Titz 2008: 127).

Individual interests, needs, social participation, and the very personal meaning of life are therefore central motivations for older people to learn technology. However, if they do not become active and discover educational contexts, they might be left alone with their desire and end up excluded. Participation in educational opportunities often declines with the onset of retirement (Tippelt et al. 2009). It is therefore important to create low-threshold access and structures for suitable offerings.

1.3. What are the different types of education?

When geragogues talk about learning, it is important to have a broad concept of learning.

Learning does not only take place in school. In geragogy, there is a distinction between 3 forms of learning (Stiel, Presentation at University of Education Karlsruhe 2020).

- **Formal learning** is goal-oriented, takes place in an institution, and is based on a curriculum. It includes an examination and certification at the end.
- **Non-formal learning** is purposeful and is not necessarily connected to a certification. In this case, a person learns with another motivational background: e.g. the person is committed to becoming a technical ambassador for the elderly.
- **Informal learning** is an unconscious form of learning, e.g. when the grandchild comes over and shows his/her grandparents a new function on the smartphone.

In old age, formal learning becomes less relevant. In contrast, educational opportunities that take place in the area of non-formal and informal learning are given greater weight.

Due to the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, many activities shifted to digital at short notice. As a result, many citizens were compelled to acquire new digital skills promptly and flexibly. This development illustrates processes of successful social participation, at least of people ages 70 and above.

In geragogy, an additional distinction between forms of learning has become useful (see Bubolz-Lutz et al. 2010), i.e. three basic forms of learning: (1) Learning from one another, (2) learning with one another, and (3) learning about one another. Kiegelmann (see Presentation at DGGG 2020) adds a fourth form, namely learning for one another. For example, when people acquire knowledge and gain experience in the field of new information and communication technologies so that they can grant access to these for the elderly. In addition, Herche-Neves emphasizes in this context that central in geragogy are differences between members of the same age cohort, not between generations. The gap within the old generation is central in geragogy, not between old and young (see also: BAGSO Symposium 2019).

1.4. Geragogical principles for the design of education

Geragogy examines how learning processes need to be initiated, managed, and structured in order to achieve a successful outcome.

There have been many research projects with elderly people in which the conditions under learning in old age particularly works well were defined (see Schramek and Stiel 2020; Bubolz- Lutz et.al. 2010; Köster et.al. 2008).

Stiel and Schramek analyzed these projects in order to indicate the following principles (Stiel 2020):

1.4.1. “Linking reflection, learning, and action”:

Even with practice-oriented training, knowledge and technical competence can only be sustainably integrated into one's own action if the subjective meaning has been recognized.

1.4.2. “Self-determination in the learning process”:

The more learners can determine the content, sequence, and method of learning, the better learning works.

1.4.3. “Equal attitude”:

In geragogical forms of learning, symmetrical communication is implemented. Learning facilitators and learners both define themselves as experts in different fields and communicate on equal terms.

1.4.4. “Learning through experience and exchange”:

It is important to build on the experiential knowledge of older learners in order to make it useable for educational processes.

1.4.5. “Contact, community and being included”:

Educational practice shows that learners who feel integrated into a group or an institution report positively on their learning experiences. Thus, learning groups often stay together for years, maintain exchanges with each other, and stay in touch.

1.4.6. “Integration of social space and life contexts”:

Technology education should be aligned to life contexts each time.

1.4.7. “Designing stimulating and safe places of learning”:

Learning environments should be designed in such a way that they evoke a feeling of safety, since experiencing safety is a basic need in learning processes.

1.4.8. “Addressing values in the learning process”:

Negative images of age hinder learning.

1.4.9. “Differentiation in the learning process”:

The heterogeneity of age and inter-individual differences should be treated with/faced by diversity and differentiation in the learning process.

(Schramek und Stiel 2020: 9, freely translated by Herche-Neves)

2. New media and digital literacy for elderly

2.1. Why is learning important even in old age? What elderly need new media for?

Digitalization affects the lives of every individual in terms of their options for action, the shaping of interpersonal communication, and living together in families, neighborhoods, and society.

On the one hand, there is the threat of social exclusion. Digitalization is present in our lives as never before. Those who don't participate can be left behind. The choice between analog and digital is diminishing. Ganymed's main goal is to enable multipliers who are

older people and/or support older people to participate in digital communication because this is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for social participation.

On the other hand, digitalization promises inclusion and a higher quality of life in old age. Older people's interest in new technologies is rising. Hence, their capacity to take an active role is increasingly strengthened and they are given more autonomy and self-determination in their own homes. Furthermore, digitalization also provides solutions for structural problems in rural areas and immobility. Digital literacy has become more important than ever for participation in society. (BAGSO Symposium 2019)

2.2. What is digital literacy and why is it Important?

"Digital literacy means having the skills people need to live, learn, and work in a society where communication and access to information are increasingly through digital technologies like internet platforms, social media, and mobile devices.

Communication is a key aspect of the digital literacy. When communicating in virtual environments, the ability to clearly express ideas, ask relevant questions, maintain respect, and build trust is just as important as when communicating in person." (<https://www.westernsydney.edu.au> 2021)

The term digital literacy does not only mean the skill to handle a medium, it rather includes the ability to reflect on its functionality and to formulate critical aspects (Baacke 1998). Accordingly, Baacke's concept of digital literacy refers to the ability to effectively use media and content conveyed by media corresponding to one's own goals and needs.

An example of studies on digital literacy within a social context in Germany is the D21-Digital-Index. It is a major social study, which provides an annual, comprehensive picture of the degree of digitalization in German society. It shows the heterogeneity of the digital society. Based on various sociodemographic characteristics, strong differences in the degree of digitalization can be observed, which illustrates a digital divide. Age represents the major influence here. However, there is no random distribution of online or offline users at an older age. Here play gender, income, education, and region, in particular, a pivotal role.

In the age groups up to around 60, there are data on men and women in Germany who are online users in equal numbers. However, the older people get, the greater the difference between men and women becomes. This is because men are more frequently involved with technology in their professions and thus gain more experience with it than women. The Eighth Report on Aging for the German Federal Government points out that access to and use of digital offerings are unequally distributed within the group of older people depending on their level of education and income - significantly more unequally than between younger people. (Schramek and Stiel 2020). The higher the education and the higher the income in old age, the more likely the person is to be online.

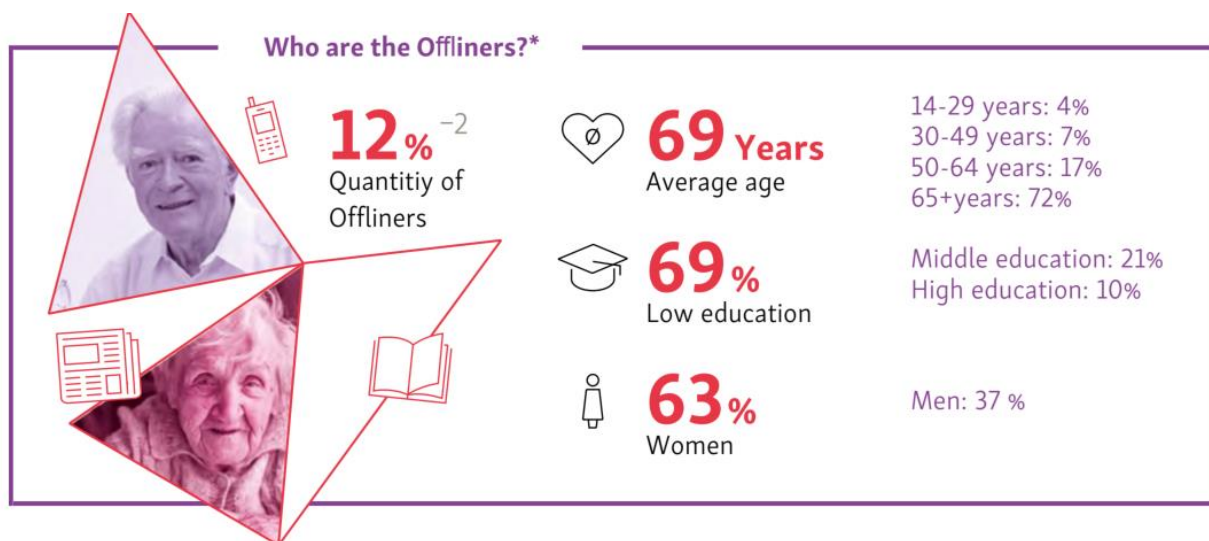


Figure 1 - Offliners statistic (D21- Digital- Index 2020/2021)-translated by Herche-Neves

In terms of the proportion of people who are offline in the EU, there are still major differences between countries. Germany's population has an average level of digitalization. In the age group between 65-74, 3 out of 10 people are still offline. In 2019, other countries, such as Spain and Italy, were just about keeping pace with the digital transformation. In Italy 5 out of 10 and in Spain as many as 6 out of 10 continued to be offline.

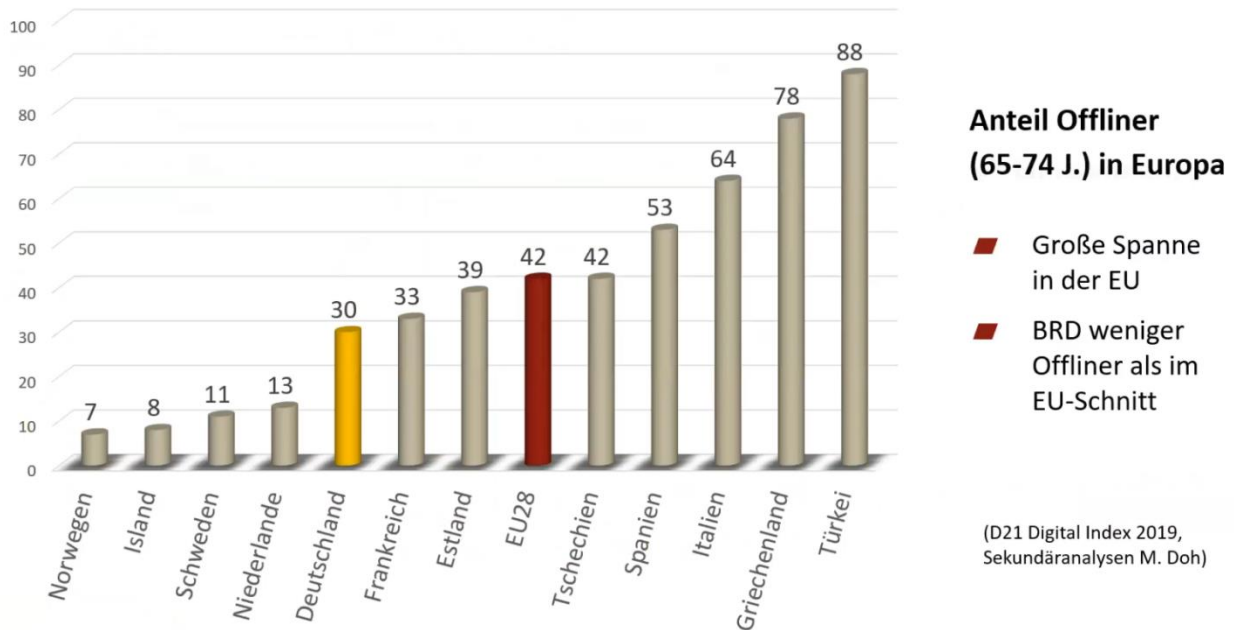


Figure 2 - Digitalization by country (age group between 65 - 74)

3. Conclusion

3.1. What are the needs and requirements?

Accordingly, Herche-Neves and Kiegelmann emphasize for the project Ganymed as a central aspect that the digital divide is not only to be found between old and young. It also exists within older generations and obviously needs to be reduced.

Digital skills have become key competencies for the social participation of all age groups. Competencies in the digital field help older people to live a self-determined life.

3.1.1. Promotion of basic digital education for elderly people

Experts emphasize that older people need specific digital skills. Accordingly competencies must be defined and offerings developed and promoted for the elderly. Learning and educational opportunities regarding digital media should be low-threshold, true to life, affordable and close to home.

3.1.2. Development of differentiated digital learning and education offerings for older people

Digital technologies are used very differently by older people - interests, previous knowledge and forms of learning may differ and should be respected. Older people are a very heterogeneous target group. There is no such thing as "the senior citizens". Among the elderly, we find people who are tech-savvy, but also people who are averse to the new technologies.

3.1.3. Training of multipliers in the field of digital education for older people

Geragoges point out that trainers in the field of digital education with older people need comprehensive training, as they must constantly adapt their knowledge to new technological developments. In addition to the relevant expertise, trainers also need didactic skills as well as openness and empathy toward older people. Respect, patience, and a positive image of one's own age are essential prerequisites for conveying content successfully and sustainably.

3.1.4. Anchoring digital education for older people in social, political and economical strategies

Society should support those who need help in taking their first steps towards digital participation. Politicians, associations as well as the business community are called upon to create and expand low-threshold and specific offerings.

Thus, the Ganymed project is valuable because it will make a significant contribution to the social inclusion of the elderly in Europe by developing and providing innovative learning content.

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