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THE IMPACT OF THE EDUCATION OF ELDERLY ADULTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURIST FARMS IN GORENJSKA REGION

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Abstract

The tourist farms are based on family businesses, where elderly adults play an important role in the development of tourist farms. The goal of this article is to explore what is the impact of education on elderly adults and the development of tourist farms. Methods: The study includes six stakeholders, key actors who are directly involved in the organization of tourist farms, all over fifty years old. The qualitative method is used in the survey, identifying problems based on partially structured interviews and summarizing based on empirical research and a descriptive, interpretative method are all used in the survey. Research has shown that older adults in lifelong learning have a strong influence on tourist farms. Conclusions: Appropriate public education policy and strengthening the social, cultural and economic environment will provide support to the entities in organizing the family business of tourist farms.

Keywords: organization's impact, sustainable development, elderly adults, tourist farms, education

INTRODUCTION

Older people are an important link for the preservation and development of management in rural areas. Organisation of complementary activities at farms is a model in which the pool of natural and cultural goods is developing into a quality offer of produce, products and services from rural areas. This paper focuses on the impact of the education of elderly adults on the development of tourist farms as one of the complementary activities in rural areas. There is no life-long learning without education for the elderly. Nowadays, everybody needs knowledge. Knowledge and experience of elderly adults are indispensable as they are based on experience from previous periods, which have to be enriched by new knowledge and findings of new technologies and new organisation. The Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia takes care about the preservation and development of tourism on farms. According to the research, conducted in Slovenia, older people may be excluded from educational and social activities in both, rural and urban areas if the offer and the activities are not close enough to them or not adapted to the new knowledge (Kump and Jelenc Krašovec, 2009). The Association of Tourist Farms provides to its members free advice on the matters of topical interest, informs them about current affairs on a monthly basis, offers free presentation at fairs within the Association, cheaper publication in the

Association promotional material, cheaper publication on the Internet, free or cheaper courses (computer courses, foreign language courses, communication with guests, etc.). (“Association of Tourist Farms”, 2013).

Learning is one of the key factors for each individual person. We set objectives in life but they are not achievable without knowledge. This is particularly true for rural areas where life conditions are different from those in urban areas. Undoubtedly, knowledge is important in order to achieve the set objectives. According to Ovsenik and Ambrož (2006) “knowledge is created in conditions which allow for continuous learning.” Considering that older adults have a lot of knowledge and abilities, the society and economy will have to get used to employing many more older people while older people will have to take care about their employability themselves, about education and training and getting to know the most recent technical and technological progress. The society will have to be stricter in eliminating discrimination on the labour market on the grounds of age. Elimination of this discrimination will decrease or eliminate also other types of discrimination and deprivation, among others also those connected with housing or urbanistic conditions (Malačič, 2013). In their research Jelenc Krašovec et al (2014) show a positive impact of elderly adults who are members, socializing and informal education and informal learning in volunteer organisations as this contributes to higher quality of life and welfare of the members of volunteer organisation as well as local community as a whole. By being members of volunteer organisations older men get not only an opportunity to stay in touch with their generation but also to meet other generations and other members of local communities; they are given an opportunity to stay active, to enjoy life and be happy as well as feel useful and respected (Jelenc Krašovec et al 2014, 24).

The willingness of older people to attend organised education is connected particularly with their level of education, occupation, gender and welfare (irrespective of where they live); the higher the level of education, the more likely they are to attend organised educational activities (Jelenc Krašovec et al 11). The jobs and tasks of complementary activities are specific and divided into more difficult manual labour and household chores. Consequently, the working role of the woman at a farm has become more highlighted, for example in carrying out agricultural works with agricultural machines. In spite of that, it is still the “first” member of the farm – the farm master – who mostly decides about vital matters, particularly of the economic and developmental nature. According to Knežević Hožever and Černič Istenič (2010) “prolonged education of farm children and searching for a job in non-agricultural activities have brought new elements to family relations, which more or less decisively define the (dis)integration processes on farms. Younger family members are economically independent, which is enough for their independent decision making, which is not necessarily directed to agricultural activity” (Knežević Hožever and Černič Istenič, 2010, 76).

In addition, farm families where the division of roles is rigid, seem to be less innovative. The size of the farm itself does not ensure that the family will be able to live on that or continue the agricultural activity. The education itself does not guarantee economic success in an agricultural business; the present work on the farm depends more on the creativity and motivation of individual members and coordination of their interests. (Knežević Hočevar and Černič Istenič, 2010, 55). “In addition to the qualification and education of the members of the farm household, the successor is important for the existence and development of farming” (Knežević Hočevar and Černič Istenič, 2010, 90). The connection between the level of education, gender and social and economic status and the decision to attend education means that less educated elderly adults, people with lower social and economic status, men and inhabitants from rural areas are in a less favourable position as on the one hand they are faced with obstacles such as previous unsuccessful experience in education, lower motivation, accessibility of education, bad transport connections – as several of them (mainly women) do not have their own transport (they do not have a driving licence or a car) and on the other hand education providers do not offer enough educational opportunities close to their homes, or they cannot recognise their unique learning needs and interests (Formosa, 2002, 76).

In her work “Izobraževanje starejših odraslih s podeželja na ljudskih univerzah v jugovzhodni Sloveniji” (Educating elderly adults from rural areas at open universities in south-east Slovenia) Ogulin Počrvina (2012) confirmed that mostly more educated elderly adults attend various organised education. “As it is the level of education and social and economic status which affect to a great extent the decision to participate in education, higher levels of participation can be expected from the future, more educated generations of elderly adults” (Ogulin Počrvina, 2012, 119).

“As long as the right of elderly adults is not regulated by law (in the sense of content and financially) and the emphasis is only on the responsibility of an individual, the trend of the inclusion of elderly adults into lifelong learning cannot be expected to increase. System regulation is a pre-condition for the development of appropriate and quality offer of education for elderly adults and offers an opportunity for the providers of education to respond appropriately to the needs of various groups of elderly adults (...)” (Ogulin Počrvina, 2012, 106).

In recent years, life periods have been changing. In comparison with the third period of life, the second period has shrunk substantially. Due to aging population, the third period of life has become longer. Thirty of forty years of the third period of life requires preparation and training, structuring of time, new contents and objectives. Changes are rapid and therefore old patterns and the image of old age is becoming very different (Kranjc et al 2013, 16-18).

All education of elderly adults (irrespective of the content) is at the same time also education for acquiring power and influence: psychological, social, economic and political. However, in practice education for elderly adults is focused mainly on offering free time activities. Taking aging society in

consideration, marginalisation of elderly adults will have to be surpassed by critical education gerontology, emancipation will have to be strengthened as will the influence of elderly adults for political, social and community activity (Hlebec et al 2013, 7). Further on, Kump and Jelenc Krašovec (2005) find out that in political discourse and documents education of elderly adults is only of secondary importance. Financing and system regulation are important aspects. “Ensuring multilateral professional and political support for the education of elderly adults will strengthen the power and influence of elderly adults” (Kump and Jelenc-Krašovec, 2005, 246). Fragoso (2012, 59) provides the results of a survey which clearly show the existence of intergenerational influence of the level of education as there is a strong connection between the parents' and children's education. In other words, adult education will be paid off in the future. Informal education can play an important role when helping people to acquire the required training, which can result in improved quality of life.

PERCEPTION OF INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT ON EDUCATION

Formosa and Marvin suggest the principles of critical gerontogics to be implemented with the emphasis placed on the implementation of appropriate policy and rejecting the opinion that elderly adults can acquire power and influence with any kind of education (Formosa and Marvin, 2002, 80). Human being is not a slave of “customs” but a rational actor for whom each custom and institution serve a function, contributing its share to meeting the needs of an individual and the community (Monaghan and Just, 2008, 66).

The value of a certain place is its public place. A public place is a place of more or less intensive cultural production of all kinds, which is based on the local tradition or the tradition, created as a consequence of external influences. That cultural production, which has been collected for centuries and often has to be discovered by adult education, grows its roots and creates an identity that is typical of a certain place and makes it different from other places (Sousa, 2013, 41). Citizens, who do not understand political, economic, social or technological changes, which are happening at the local as well as at the global levels, are faced with social exclusion, which could be prevented by regular informing of the society. Those factors affect the community and individuals. Retired people can integrate only if they understand what is happening and what their role in the society is. Lifelong learning is everybody's right and it should not be withheld from elderly adults. Education can be offered as a way to improve personal and social skills. Being a part of community means a need for socializing, discussion and discussion about their own rights (Escuder-Mollon, 2012, 2343). According to Monaghan and Just (2008) “culture and knowledge is learnt, adaptable, symbolic behaviour, based on the developed language, connected with technical resourcefulness, a complex of skills, which depends on the ability to organise the relationships of exchanging among communities”. (Monaghan and Just, 2008, 60). Longer life expectancy, transition from the usual living with three

generations to four generations gradually lead to practical changes in the regulation of social life. At the same time, the collective, genealogical and historic memory is expanding; an individual has more opportunities to feel and imagine how their history is connected with the general history of the environment (Augé, 2011, 35). Local people's phantasms are phantasms about a closed world, founded only once and for ever that actually does not have to be known. Everything that needs to be known, is already known: cultivated land, forests, sources, sights, places of worship, medicinal plants as well as time dimensions of a place with their underlying stories about the emergence and calendars of customs, providing welfare and, at least in principle, strength. In such case you just have to recognise yourself in such a world (Augé, 2011, 49). A group of authors Pelham et al (2012, 12) from California agree that an interactional approach to education is required and that the Gerontology Association should accredit gerontology programmes in higher education. Credible gerontologists are duly qualified and possess the skills to be employed as experts in that area. The employed experts affect the quality of care for elderly adults due to their skills and academic preparation. They have a positive influence of public perceptions and expectations regarding the standards of care, particularly in comparison with the providers of care who did not have appropriate education in the field of gerontology. The public, which expects high quality services, increases also the quality of care for the elderly. Public perception of gerontology, which is fully exposed to the field, leads to higher awareness and demand for gerontology programmes by students.

CONDITIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF TOURIST FARMS IN GORENJSKA

Vanja Bajd Frelih, a coordinator for farm families and complementary activities for Gorenjska, from Agriculture and Forestry Institute Kranj, which operates within the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia (hereinafter referred to as: CAFS), unit Kranj (Bajd-Frelih, 2012), (personal communication, 13 May 2012) explains the opportunities for lifelong learning in the field of tourist farms in Gorenjska. In order to carry out complementary activity on the farm, which includes also tourist activity at the farm as one of the main complementary activities, the holders of the activity have to comply with the 2019 Agriculture Act (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 45/2008 of 9 May 2008) and, as the activity refers also to hospitality, also the Hospitality Industry Act (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 93/2007 of 12 October 2007). Various inspection services are responsible for controlling compliance with the regulations that tourist farms have to comply with. In addition to primary, vocational, secondary and higher education, various development agencies - RAS – Development Agency in Administrative Unit Škofja Loka, BSC Regional development agency of Gorenjska in Administrative Unit Kranj and Administrative Unit Tržič, and RAGOR Development Agency of Upper Gorenjska in Administrative Unit

Jesenice and Administrative Unit Radovljica – take care at the regional level about the conditions and opportunities for lifelong learning and career development. All agencies list activities and programmes for successful social and economic development of regions. A substantial part of their activities and programmes is aimed at rural areas. In addition, Agriculture and Forestry Institute Kranj with several units in the entire region, takes care about conducting lifelong learning, training and education with the help of their agricultural advisers in the field of agricultural family and complementary activities. Specialists for agricultural advice are also engaged in education, raising awareness and advising rural population.

Tkalčič (2018) thinks that the needs for education, training and development of knowledge in tourist activity are increasing. New work processes and production technologies are being created. Utilisation of knowledge is increasing, new forms of tourism are appearing, new information technologies are being developed, the competitiveness of the market environment is increasing and an innovative way of solving problems is strengthening (Tkalčič 2018).

In his research Zalar (2012) finds out “that when comparing the educational structure in the field of tourist farms in Gorenjska and entire Slovenia, Gorenjska tourist farms lack knowledge, particularly up-to-date functional knowledge. In Gorenjska, only 10 % of inhabitants have higher education, and in agriculture as many as 85 % holders of primary activity at the farm do not have appropriate education.” (Zalar, 2012, 37). According to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2016) at the level of Slovenia since 2013 the number of masters (managers) at family farms with higher education has increased by 18 % (they managed 12 % of all family farms). The number of masters (managers) at family farms with secondary professional or secondary general education has also increased by 13 % (they managed 23 % of all family farms). The number of masters (managers) with primary school education (they managed 25 % of all family farms) has decreased by 16 %. The number of masters (managers) with lower vocational or secondary vocational education (they managed 38 % of all family farms) has decreased by 7 %. 1832 family farms (3 % of all family farms) were managed by masters without education or incomplete primary education (“STAT.SI”, 2018).

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

We were mainly interested in the impact and purpose of the education of elderly adults on the development of tourist farms in Gorenjska. As informal knowledge is an important part of qualification and education of actors in the environment concerned, the inclusion of the elderly in the social networks and intergenerational relationships in the family, which have a significant influence on the development of tourist farms, has also been highlighted.

The research aims to answer the following questions, which are important in order to clarify the problem concerned:

- What is your opinion about the importance of education and further training for the development of tourist activity at the farm?
- Are family members included in social networks and how useful is this for the development of your activity?
- What are intergenerational relationships like and how do they affect the development of the farm?

METHODS

A qualitative method was applied in the research, establishing the problems on the basis of partly structured interviews and summarising on the basis of an empirical research, as well as a descriptive interpretative method. I personally conducted the interviews by visiting the interviewees at their homes by asking partly structured open questions.

The sample is not random – I selected the holders who are directly connected with life and work at tourist farms. Six holders, key actors, who are directly involved in the organisation of tourist farms, are included in the research. Vencelj Tušar, President of the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia, also the holder of the activity at Kmetija iz Kojce in Idrija Cerklje region. Vanja Bajd Frelih, a coordinator for farm families and complementary activities for Gorenjska, from Agriculture and Forestry Institute Kranj, unit Škofja Loka, and Saša Jereb, a member of the Management Board of the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia, a representative for Gorenjska and owner of tourist farm Loka turizem. Other three holders of tourist activity at a farm in the area of Gorenjska did not want to be named.

Collection of data. I personally conducted the interviews in November 2016 by visiting the interviewees at their homes by asking partly structured open questions. Interviews were recorded and transcribed in a Word document, which was then exported to Atlas.ti software.

RESULTS

The data were analysed by coding, individual answers were divided into meaningful structures. The interviews are transcribed and saved in electronic form in Atlas.ti. The data were processed by qualitative analysis; the analysis was conducted by hand. The analysis aims at in-depth understanding of suitability (content diversity) of the impact of elderly adult education (Mesec, 2019).

Table 1: Attribution of semantic structures and quotation categories

<i>Answers by interviewees</i>	Semantic structures	Categories
<i>(1) those who do not acquire knowledge, are not able to behave properly, elderly people have a lot of</i>	(1) communication skills, application of functional knowledge,	The impact of learning in the environment

<p><i>experience and knowledge, which is invaluable for the farm,</i> <i>(2) how to attract guests and how to deal with guests, work is transferred from generation to generation,</i> <i>(3) high value added for new development and keeping people in rural areas, land requires work and cultivation,</i> <i>(4) not every farmer is able to be engaged in the complementary activity of tourism at the farm, lifelong learning has a significant impact on work at the farm,</i> <i>(5) at least secondary education is required,</i> <i>(6) informal education is welcome,</i></p>	<p>(2) transfer of knowledge from generation to generation, (3) sustainable development, need for applicable knowledge, (4) lack of knowledge for complementary activities, adapting to technological changes, (5) higher demands for education , (6) need for applicable specific knowledge,</p>	<p>(tourist farms)</p>
<p><i>(1) they do not function according to their wishes, mother is mainly doing the chores,</i> <i>(2) significance of development agencies, younger generation is more engaged with tourism and older with farming or vice versa, they have suitable conditions for the inclusion in social and cultural life,</i> <i>(3) involved in various societies,</i> <i>(4) the youth gets married later in life ,</i> <i>(5) family disputes are a problem,</i></p>	<p>(1) feeling of responsibility and activity, organisational structure and adapting to the specifics of work, (2) care about the environment monitoring, abilities of individuals, (3) (4) (5) social conditions of inclusion,</p>	<p>Social inclusion and social networks</p>
<p><i>(1) young people master that better, work from generation to generation,</i> <i>(2) the elderly are also included well, young people continue the tradition with the help of the elderly,</i> <i>(3) parents do not arrange inheritance early enough,</i> <i>(4) the elderly are afraid what will happen to them if they give up the ownership of the property,</i> <i>(5) I think that such cooperation would be desirable,</i> <i>(6) little children enjoy the company of their grandparents,</i></p>	<p>(1) high level of trust to young people, exemplary intergenerational cooperation, (2) creating conditions for the youth and intergenerational cooperation, (3) lack of understanding and trust for the youth, disputes, (4) fear of exclusion, (5) suggestions for improving the situation, (6) excellent relationships with grandchildren, education and care.</p>	<p>Intergenerational relationships</p>

ANSWERS TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is your opinion about the importance of education and further training for the development of tourist activity at the farm?

Lifelong learning and elderly adult education has a strong impact on tourist farms. Communication skills and applicable functional knowledge which help members of family farms develop the operation of the tourist farm are very important. Elderly adults are aware of the significance of transferring the knowledge from generation to generation. This refers particularly to experiential knowledge, which is upgraded by general education. Sustainable development and need for applicable knowledge are of key importance in preserving the natural environment and an opportunity for young people to stay in rural areas and create their career path there. It has been established that there is lack of knowledge for complementary activities and adapting to technological changes. This results in higher demand for education and the need for applicable specific knowledge.

Are family members included in social networks and how useful is this for the development of your activity?

Inclusion of elderly adults in social networks increases their feeling of responsibility and diligence for the development of the tourist farm organisational structure and adapting to the specifics of the work of tourist complementary activity at the farm. Their care for monitoring the social environment and an insight in the abilities of individual members of their family motivate them to be engaged in continuous further training. Elderly adults have ample opportunities to be members of various societies and clubs. They think that young people have problems finding a life partner. There are family disputes but they do not cause substantial problems for the operation of the tourist farm.

What are intergenerational relationships like and how do they affect the development of the farm?

The level of trusting young people is high. They think that trust between the older and the young generation is exemplary. Elderly adults strive for creating the conditions for young people, which will allow for successful preservation and development of the family farm and intergenerational cooperation. They think that young people have problems finding a life partner. There are family disputes but they do not cause substantial problems for the operation of the tourist farm. The fear of social exclusion is present. Excellent relationships with grandchildren, education and care are all great motivation.

DISCUSSION

Tourist farm activities are directed to continuous improving of products. They strive to preserve the cultural and natural environment of where they live as they are aware of the significance of preserving cultural heritage, its significance for the recognition of identity and thus creating as authentic offer as possible. Undoubtedly, they are also aware of the significance of accepting novelties and

improvements in rural areas (Bajd-Frelj, 2012). The organisation of the subjects involved is carried out excellently at all levels. Special attention is paid to planning, management, monitoring and evaluation of results. The research shows a positive attitude to further training and education of the holders of activity as well as their family members as found out also by Jelenc Krašovec et al, 2014; Ogulin Počrvina, 2012; Kump in Jelenc Krašovec, 2009). In recent years, there has been a lot of work carried out in rural areas, particularly in the field of tourist farms. In 1997 the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia was established, which has contributed significantly to the development of tourism at farms ("Združenje turističnih kmetij", 2013). Holders of the activity agree that networking of their activity at farms is vital as it strengthens the quality of life of the elderly in rural areas. They are aware of the significance of lifelong learning and the need to upgrade their potential (Krajnc, 2009). In order to be able to follow the consumer needs, information connection and ICT knowledge is essential (Hlebec et al. 2013).

CONCLUSION

The impact of the education of elderly adults on the development of tourist farms is seen in several areas. Intergenerational relationships are extremely important, particularly the understanding of younger generation in the development of their career. It is this that often leads to family disputes when decisions about inheritance and operation of the family tourist farm are being made. According to the President of the Association of Tourist Farms of Slovenia Tušar, "There are fewer problems in families where the older generation has created the basis for successful life and work and where they have decided who will be managing the farm in the future." (Tušar, 2012). New complementary activities, such as tourism, are appearing, the renovation and transfer of ownership to younger generation, and the influence of elderly adults is particularly important in this field. Their material and financial support as well as their knowledge and experience contribute substantially to the revitalisation and development of tourist farms. Development of tourist activity in rural areas contributes to preserving social, natural and cultural environment of the whole country. In future, the environment concerned will have to be monitored continuously, changes will have to be followed, and in case of any problems public policy will have to be called for support in preserving and developing rural areas. This results also in higher self-employment.

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