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A graduate of pedagogics at the University of Wrocław, currently a student of doctoral studies, organiser and participant of many academic conferences, panel discussions and research projects. Mgr Golonka has been working with the University of the Third Age at the University of Wrocław for five years. For a few years she has been participating in national and international projects aimed at people over 50 years of age, as well. Since the spring of 2005 she has been taking part in the *@ktywny Senior* project. Co-author of the curriculum of the computer skills training courses for seniors organised as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project and instructor during the computer skills workshops. Her friends say that "taking into account her positive energy to body mass ratio she could be a lightning during a summer thunderstorm". Despite always being busy and on the move she can always find time for other people.

Computer skills training course for seniors – experience gained from the *@ktywny Senior* project

Summary: For a few years the problems of promoting active living and education among seniors has been a source of great interest of educators representing diverse scholarly branches as well as those undertaking various actions aimed at people of advanced age. Posing questions related to the system of education of seniors while seeking answers to them in the experience gained from undertaken actions constitutes a contemporary issue of particular importance. It is, therefore, made possible to constantly improve the quality of education and to conduct an ongoing evaluation of the teaching methods used in order to optimise them.

The present article is an attempt at joining the discussion on the subject of the promotion of active use of computer skills among seniors. The experience gained during the *@ktywny Senior* project constitutes the basis of the analysis and the subject matter of the present article.

The subject of the article is directly related to the carrying out and the methodology of the computer skills workshops organised as part of the discussed project. In the subsequently presented parts such issues as: plan of the computer skills training course, the space of the computer lab, rules of the education of seniors, the aims and the curriculum, plan of the classes, methods and forms of teaching are discussed. The article is completed with a presentation of the teaching materials.

Key words: New technology, computer skills workshops, seniors, education of seniors, process of the education of seniors, computer skills training course for seniors, active senior, promoting active living among the 50+ generation, continued education, geronto-pedagogics.

The 21st century, though variously defined and instantiated, is commonly associated with an ongoing development of modern technology. What is important, however, is the fact that computers are increasingly more available. Such situation is a source of a number of changes both at the micro- and macro-social levels. Living in the modern world requires openness to innovation and change on a level that was not required thousands, hundreds, and even tens of years ago¹⁾. The inability of an individual or entire societies to follow the changing reality may lead to marginalisation.

Continued education is as strength and a value that may allow an individual to fully integrate with reality. However, the promotion and forming of the adjustment of knowledge as well as providing conditions necessary to for its fulfilment present a challenge to contemporary education. The process should lead to the broadening of knowledge and development of competences and skills. It should bring modernity closer. It should allow for a comprehension of contemporary civilisation and technology²⁾.

The group that especially needs help and support in the dynamic process of the development of reality are, among others, seniors³⁾. The instability of social behaviour, the fast technological progress, the changing trends, way of life, and even everyday language lead to the isolation and marginalisation of people of advanced age⁴⁾.

¹⁾ M. Ułaszewska, M. Żuk, *Starość jako etap rozwoju człowieka*, [in:] U. Dębska (ed.), *Blżej człowieka. Konteksty interdyscyplinarne*, Wrocław 2006, p. 132.

²⁾ Cf. O. Czerniawska, *Wokół edukacji osób starszych*, „Acta UniversitatisLodziensis Folia Pedagogica” 2003, Issue 5, p. 158.

³⁾ It is difficult to provide an unambiguous definition of the category of senior age due to the variety of criteria determining its onset. A starting event of the period of the so-called late adulthood is usually the moment of retirement, that is the age of about 60–65. Most often it is assumed that the age of 60–75 is the period of early old age, 75–90 constitutes advanced old age, with the age of over 90 being the late old age, the age of longevity. (J. Janiszewska-Rain, *Okres późnej dorosłości. Jak rozpoznać ryzyko i jak pomagać?*, [in:] A.I. Brzezińska (ed.), *Psychologiczne portrety człowieka*, Gdańsk 2005, p. 595).

In the present article the term „senior” signifies a retired person. The terms „person of the third age” and „person of advanced age” are also used.

⁴⁾ M. Ułaszewska, M. Żuk, op.cit., p. 132.

Nevertheless, over the last few years one could clearly observe the need and the willingness of individual development among seniors. A growing number of people of the so-called third age seek new areas of activity: intellectual, cultural, social, and physical ones; they are also willing to benefit from the opportunities provided from them. At the same time, seniors share their experience and knowledge of life which not only makes them an example to their peers but also compels admiration and gains respect of the members of younger generations.

In relation to the above issues the promotion of active living among seniors as well as providing them with opportunities for development, in the broad sense of the term, i.e. psychological and individual development, self-awareness, self-acceptance, self-realisation, etc. constitute an important area of educational activity.

While concentrating on the subject matter and the aims of this book, which is the presentation of the results of the *@ktywny Senior* project, in the present article the emphasis is put on the methodology of computer skills training of people of late adulthood. That is why the most important issues regarding the organisation and the conducting of the beginner level computer skills workshops are discussed herein, with the teaching materials presented to complete it. All the discussed problems are related to the education of people of the third age. The experience gained while conducting the aforementioned project constitutes the source of the presented information.

The book is especially intended for instructors and people conducting computer skills training courses for seniors as well as organisations and associations working with seniors. On the other hand, the information contained in the present book may serve as a proof of the so-called "good practice", which is what undoubtedly characterised the *@ktywny Senior* project; it is also a recognition of all the seniors who participated in the project and their attitude and commitment that showed just how valuable and needed such activities are. The present article is, therefore, to be seen first and foremost as an inspiration for further work.

Organisation of the computer skills training course

The planning and organisation stage as well as conducting the training aimed at seniors is closely connected with the knowledge of the needs, and the intellectual, psychological, and physical potential and abilities of people of the third age.

It must be taken into account that the seniors who participate in various projects tailored for them usually constitute the elite among the members of their age group: they make an individual decision to participate in the classes, they have wisdom and a broad knowledge of life, they are willing to share their experience (regardless of their education)⁵⁾.

⁵⁾ The statement is a general conclusion formulated on the basis of the various types of projects aimed at seniors and organised in Wrocław. It must be taken into account that the so-called „active seniors” despite the aforementioned trait do not constitute a uniform group. A general image of a senior-participant of activities aimed at people of advanced age cannot be defined. Cf. J. Golonka, *Kurs obsługi komputera jako forma inicjacji informatycznej seniora na przykładzie słuchaczy Uniwersytetu*

What is the issue of crucial importance here is that seniors are a very demanding audience and the entire process of education is highly individualised.

The instructor staff of the computer skills training courses organised as part of the @ktywny Senior project was made up of undergraduate and doctoral studies students of pedagogics at the University of Wrocław who specialise in adult education and implement various projects aimed at seniors.

The "instructor training meeting" organised at the beginning of the course was a stage of crucial importance; it was devoted to the methodology of the classes and discussion of the curriculum. It was aimed at determining and standardising the details of the plan and the conducting of the computer skills training course and agreeing on the curriculum⁶⁾ by all teachers taking part in the course.

Employing such strategy is necessary in a situation when the training is conducted by a number of different people (as in the case of the discussed course). Accepting one plan to be consistently implemented by all of the instructors (starting at the very beginning of the course) is directly related to the need for balance, as clearly expressed by seniors. What is more, the idea here is to standardise the material aspect of the classes (providing an answer to the question: how do we conduct the classes?) and formulating the information to be taught (providing an answer to the question: what do we teach?). The pace of the classes is determined by the intellectual, psychological, and physical abilities of the members of particular groups. Furthermore, it is always adjusted to the people who have the most problems acquiring new information.

Yet another issue connected with the organisation of the classes is dividing the participants into groups. The essential problem is the size of each group. There should not be more than 8 people in a group. Such number allows for the individualisation of the training. Nevertheless, the participants of the @ktywny Senior project were divided into 6 groups of 10 people each. Raising the number of participants was made possible by the voluntary workers who took part in the project and who supported the process of education during the classes (individual help in completing the tasks).

During the stage of forming of the groups such factors as the level of proficiency in using computers, age, and gender need to be taken into account. Firstly, a group should be made up of people at a similar level of proficiency which allows for a much better fulfilling of the needs of particular participants of the course. Secondly, a group should be made up of people of similar age, which allows for the using of teaching methods and techniques that are sufficient for the intellectual,

Trzeciego Wieku w Uniwersytecie Wrocławskim, [in:] L. Jakubowska-Malicka, A. Kobylarek, M. Pryszmont-Ciesielska, *Audiowizualność. Cyberprzestrzeń, Hipertekstualność. Ponowoczesne konteksty edukacji*, Wrocław 2009, p. 295–298.

⁶⁾ The computer skills training curriculum that was used in the project had been successfully implemented for years at the University of the Third Age at the University of Wrocław and developed by one of the instructors.

psychological, and physical abilities of its members. Thirdly, despite the differences in how men and women learn, the groups should be heterogeneous in order to exercise positive influence on the atmosphere of the classes and to encourage communication, in the broad sense of the word.

Unfortunately, in relation to the aforementioned activities, it was not possible to create groups uniform as to the level of proficiency of all their members. Nevertheless, the adaptability and diversity of the teaching methods and the variety of exercises allowed for a fluent carrying out of the training.

While planning a computer skills training course it is necessary to make it possible for the participants of the workshops to have free access to computers outside the classes in order for them to practise the formerly acquired skills. In the case of the *@ktywny Senior* project the above condition was met.

Before the start of the course such issues as the duration of the classes (each meeting lasting 2×45 minutes) and of the breaks (15 minutes) and the weekly schedule of the workshops (each group meeting 2 or 3 times a week) had to be considered. The number of hours devoted to computer skills training of seniors was originally determined by the organisers of the entire project (30 classes).

The *@ktywny Senior* project was characterised by the so-called group rotation – the classes were conducted by a number of different instructors. That is why establishing communication between the teachers became an issue of crucial importance. In relation to the discussed project it was decided that so-called class reports were to be written. It was made obligatory for all the instructors to prepare a detailed description of the workshops classes conducted on each day with a particular group. It was necessary to address such issues as revision (description of the progress of learning, pinpointing the observed problems), the information introduced (emphasising the elements that require additional attention and concentration of the teacher because of the difficulty in understanding that the seniors have), the general atmosphere of the class, and propositions of further work in the report.

Furthermore, throughout the entire project all those who conducted the workshops were to share their experiences up to speed; they would make a combined effort to solve the problems related to giving the classes as well as the changing information that was to be introduced. During the courses it is necessary to take into account the fact that the curriculum may be modified due to the requirement to adjust the discussed subject to the abilities and needs of the participants of the project and the speed at which they acquire information. Yet another essential question is that of the analysis of the workshops in relation to the general atmosphere of the classes (solving the problems together and working out a strategy of dealing with problem situations).

What characterises the *@ktywny Senior* project was the participation of voluntary workers in the computer skills training. What is important, however, is the help in the organisation of the classes that the seniors themselves decided to provide –

the seniors who had taken part in the previous computer skills training courses organised by Wrocławskie Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych (NGOs support centre in Wrocław) – Sektor 3. The commitment of the voluntary workers and their presence during the classes had a major influence on the quality of education. Most of the voluntary workers expressed great empathy in their attitude towards their peers taking part in the arduous task of learning⁷⁾. Nevertheless, it was required of the instructors to control the efforts of the voluntary workers so that they do not perform the tasks given to the students instead of helping them.

The space of the computer lab

The "learning space" plays an essential role in the process of education. It is often that the location determines the successfulness of the undertaken efforts. That is why all possible efforts must be made to secure optimal learning conditions and equipment.

The computer skills training workshops for seniors organised as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project were conducted in the computer lab situated in the modern building of the Wrocławskie Centrum Wspierania Organizacji Pozarządowych (NGOs support centre in Wrocław) Sektor 3. Henceforth, the workshops were carried out in a spacious, light building and room adapted to the needs of the disabled (a lift and a lavatory suited to the needs of the disabled). The room was fitted with computer desks (easy access to each of them) and a board. It was also possible for the instructors to use a copier and a printer⁸⁾.

All the computers were placed on special desks which allowed everyone to take a proper yet comfortable working position (which is of crucial importance during trainings intended for seniors). All the chairs were adjustable. Such elements as mouse settings (the speed of the cursor), regulation of the computer screens (setting contrast and brightness), the font and icon size, placing the shortcuts to the applications used during the classes on the desktops were also taken into account.

The ventilation of the room was yet another important issue. That is why before each class as well as during the breaks it was made sure that the class was properly ventilated. Furthermore, coat hangers were prepared, so that it was possible for everyone to work and study comfortably. During the breaks the seniors had access to drinks machines as well as a water dispenser.

⁷⁾ The answers to the evaluation survey suggest that the participants valued the help of the voluntary workers highly.

⁸⁾ It would have been perfect if it was made possible to use the computer connected to the projector – then the discussion of the particular tasks could have been accompanied by a presentation ("step by step") of each subject. However, due to location and financial reasons such a solution appears to still belong to the future.

The rules of education

In relation to the computer skills training organised as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project the following rules of education were assumed⁹⁾:

- ❖ The rule of meeting high standards of quality of education – resulting from the lack of time to correct the mistakes made during the process of education. The awareness of participating in education of the highest quality makes its participants feel special, "chosen", as it were, among their peers (people of the same age). Therefore, it allows them to construct a positive image of themselves in relation to their age.
- ❖ The rule of addressing the seniors' life experience: using the experience and the knowledge of life as an important source of information and making the participants aware of their value; boosting the seniors' self-esteem.
- ❖ The rule of temporality: the necessity to devote more time to acquisition and completing certain tasks (in the case of seniors the reaction time increases with age, which leads to expanding the time needed to complete intellectual tasks, acquiring, processing, and remembering information). Adapting the time to the abilities of the students.
- ❖ The rule of positive evaluation of the effects of education: promoting the seniors' motivation to learn, boosting the seniors' self-esteem. Nevertheless, the evaluation should be credible; one needs to refrain from excessive rewarding. Specific achievements are to be appreciated.
- ❖ The rule of taking into account the physical condition and health of the seniors: taking special care of the learning conditions and consideration for the rules of organisation of effective intellectual effort.
- ❖ The rule of taking into account the seniors' intellectual abilities: planning and conducting the classes with the use of the step by step method.
- ❖ The rule of practicality: adjusting the introduced information to the performed tasks; learning in the context of the seniors' everyday life needs.

The aims and the curriculum

The aims and curriculum the computer skills training workshops were directly related to the main idea behind the *@ktywny Senior* project – the prevention of marginalisation of seniors¹⁰⁾ as well as the global aims of third age education: helping people of advanced age to understand the world in connection with the ability to interpret it, defeating the acquired helplessness of seniors and overcoming the stereotypical thinking related to the perceived weakness of people of advanced age and the impropriety of certain behaviours, practical implementation

⁹⁾ E. Skibińska, *Proces kształcenia seniorów*, [in:] A. Fabiś (ed.), *Aktywność społeczna, kulturalna i oświatowa seniorów*, Bielsko-Biała 2008, p. 112.

¹⁰⁾ Cf. <http://www.sektor3.wroclaw.pl/forum/topics/1907650:Topic:3680>, retrieved: 10.07.2009.

of the seniors' knowledge¹¹⁾. In relation to the above propositions the following aims of the classes were formulated:

- Teaching elementary practical computer skills¹²⁾.
- Broadening the knowledge related to the possible uses of computers in everyday life.
- Overcoming the anxiety and individual barriers connected with using computers.
- Teaching the user-computer communication and mutual interaction.
- Teaching internet use skills¹³⁾.
- Encouraging curiosity.
- Equalling the seniors' educational chances and promoting active living among them¹⁴⁾.

Furthermore, their scope was related to needs of seniors discussed in reference books: the needs to understand and interpret the world, to have certain skills making everyday life easier, taking care of oneself, and reaching the highest standards connected with the above¹⁵⁾.

Despite the lack of a hierarchy of aims before starting the classes one must bear in mind that the fundamental issue at on all levels of education is overcoming the seniors' anxiety and individual barriers connected with using computers as well as encouraging their curiosity. It is also important for the instructor to remind the participants that it is not possible to acquire all computer skills "perfectly" during just a few classes and that everyone should allow himself time to learn all the tasks.

The curriculum of the computer skills training course for seniors has been developed and adjusted to the above aims of the education as well as the abilities and individual needs of the people of advanced age. The curriculum is described in detail in annex 1. However, it is necessary to provide a comment related to the division as well as the implementation of the particular subjects.

The computer skills training course curriculum was organised and divided into smaller parts (connected with the particular classes). Nevertheless, as I have formerly mentioned, the fundamental rule of the education of seniors is individualisation, which in this case means that the order of acquiring information and skills must be preserved and that the teacher should concentrate on the quality of education rather than the pace at which the information is introduced. That is why the necessary time to be devoted to teaching a certain subject and practicing the particular tasks (curriculum vs. class) must be interpreted as a relative value.

¹¹⁾ E. Skibińska, op.cit., p. 99.

¹²⁾ Among others turning the computer on/off, creating folders and subfolders, the basics of the Word application, text editing, working with clipart objects, chart editing (cf. the workshops curriculum published at the end of the second part of the present book).

¹³⁾ Among others using an internet browser, using web search engines, searching for image files, using email, using instant messengers (cf. the workshops curriculum published at the end of the second part of the present book).

¹⁴⁾ Cf. J. Golonka, op.cit., p. 298.

¹⁵⁾ E. Skibińska, op.cit., p. 100.

During the realisation of the aforementioned project emphasis was put on establishing connections between and integrating the particular subjects within the curriculum – more advanced tasks would always contain elements of previous exercises. That is because such an organisation of the curriculum serves a dual purpose – it allows for the practising of the formerly acquired skills and for the revision of formerly introduced information; it also makes it possible for the instructor to notice “problems” with some of the subjects that might need to be discussed again. The importance of this issue lies in the fact that it provides an opportunity to help teachers assess whether a certain subject was only memorised by the participants of the workshops or if it was understood, as well, which is the very essence and aim of computer skills training.

The selection of the subjects to be included in the curriculum as well as the general level of the introduced information is characterised by practicality – adjusting the subjects of the classes to the needs of the seniors and the skills necessary to make their everyday lives easier.

Plan of the classes

The computer skills training workshops that were organised as part of the *@ktywny Senior* project took place in the morning and in the early afternoon (which is important in the process of the education of seniors). As mentioned previously, the classes took place two or three times a week. The workshops lasted for 1 h 45 minutes.

In the course of the organisation of the classes the necessity to introduce breaks during which all participants would leave the classroom to move around and to get the room ventilated¹⁶⁾ was taken into account. Therefore, the plan of the classes for each group was devised as follows: 45 minutes of class, 15 minutes of break, 45 minutes of class. Each participant received a detailed schedule of the classes which contained information about the dates and times of the particular workshops.

Planning the time was an important element. Basically, each class could be divided into the following mutually complementary parts: greeting the participants, revision of the skills introduced during the previous classes, complementing and broadening the subjects that were already familiar to the seniors; exercises, individual work, solving individual problems; the break; introducing new information in relation to the previously acquired skills (the pace individually adjusted to each group), establishing connection between the newly introduced knowledge to the information already learned; exercises; question time.

¹⁶⁾ Changing the position of the body prevents cramps and improves blood circulation, which is especially important for people of advanced age. The regular ventilation of the classroom had a beneficial influence on the conditions of further work. What is more, the friendly conversations that took place during the breaks created a pleasant atmosphere.

In this case the individualisation of the education process must be once again emphasised¹⁷⁾. Therefore, patience, flexibility and the ability to "follow" individual students constitute important skills of an instructor. In the course of computer skills training classes for seniors it is crucial for the teacher to concentrate on the quality of transfer and the skills and information acquisition rather than closely following the curriculum in a limited amount of time. It is necessary to be aware of and to accept the fact that during the workshops it might turn out that changing the curriculum is unavoidable (such a situation took place a few times during the course of the @ktywny Senior project).

Constructing a positive atmosphere full of kindness and the feeling of security in the course of the classes constitutes an integral element of the workshops. It is helpful to introduce humorous elements (especially when faced with problem situations or those that require imposing discipline). One must also remember to strengthen the seniors' motivation to learn and to boost their self-esteem as well as to appreciate the commitment of the individual participants of the workshops.

The first meeting is to a great extent decisive in successful education. Therefore, it should be aimed directly at establishing a positive, secure relationship between the instructor and the participants. The teacher's fundamental task is to introduce the seniors to a new situation in a "gentle" manner (for many people it is the first "meeting" with a computer) and to dispel the anxiety connected to both the using the computer and having to study in a group. The instructor should keep reassuring the participants of the course that they "are not going to break anything" and that "the pace of the classes will always be adjusted to the skills of the least proficient". It is worthwhile to devote some time to introducing oneself and getting to know everyone in the group. In the course of the first meeting the aims, the curriculum and the plan of the classes needs to be discussed and rules governing the workshops must be formulated (the participants are to be encouraged to propose some of their own).

The methods and forms of teaching

Yet another example of the so-called "good practice" that can be drawn from the discussed project is the instructors' selection of methods and forms of teaching. The way of introducing information must be adjusted to the age of the participants of the course and the specific character of computer skills training. It is necessary to emphasise that the generation of people of 60 years of age and more is a generation educated first and foremost on the basis of words (written and spoken)¹⁸⁾, and to take into account the fact that acquiring computer skills is closely connected to constant, individual, practical exercises (the rule is to learn in order to act, to use the knowledge¹⁹⁾).

¹⁷⁾ During some of the workshops the „revision” took up 2/3 of the class time.

¹⁸⁾ E. Skibińska, op.cit., p. 103.

¹⁹⁾ O. Czerniawska, op.cit. p. 161.

The three learning models – the aural, the visual, and the kinaesthetic ones²⁰⁾ – should be taken into account. In the course of the discussed project the methods typical of a lecture were combined with the practical ones. Furthermore, emphasis was put on organising the information and combining the theory with practice²¹⁾.

In each of the classes it was possible to distinguish the theoretical part and the exercises. Nevertheless, as was formerly emphasised, most of the class time was devoted to practice – improving the formerly acquired skills and revising the newly introduced information.

The theoretical part resembled a mini-lecture. The instructor was to discuss the particular subject in as clear a way as possible to allow everyone to understand. Attention was drawn to a detailed discussion of a particular subject and formulating the "nothing is obvious" rule. Furthermore, numerous comparisons were drawn to things, experiences and knowledge familiar to the seniors (e.g. "the desktop is like a table or a desk with various folders, files, and boxes placed on it"). What is more, it was made sure that "that which is said" is regularly illustrated on the board. The attractiveness of the lecture was enhanced by humorous elements, which served to lower the tension among the participants.

In the course of the theoretical introduction the teachers conducting the classes attempted to introduce only the most important information ("saving the information", refraining from going into details) in a way comprehensible to all the audience (short, simple sentences). It was also made sure that emphasis was put upon the practical benefits of each of the acquired skills.

The optimal adjusting of the computer-related jargon to the needs of the seniors turned out to be a major difficulty. On the one hand the instructors were aware of the fact that using technical terms is not advisable at this stage of training, on the other, introducing the participants to the basic computer-related terminology at the introductory stage of education is a crucial element of the course. In relation to this issue it was obligatory for the teachers to establish a list of terms and words that the seniors could have contact with every day (while practicing at home, while getting help, seeking advice at a computer shop, etc.) and to explain and use them during the classes.

In the course of the theoretical introduction emphasis was put on managing the groups' energy and imposing discipline. Making the seniors receptive of the information introduced by the instructor constituted an essential element

²⁰⁾ A successfully organised training must contain the part when the teacher:

- Tells the participants what they have to know so that they can hear it;
- Shows the participants what they have to learn so that they can see it;
- Allows the participants to try that which they have to learn so that they can be active.

Cf. M. Kida, R. Neczej- Świdorska, *Interaktywna metoda kształcenia dorosłych*, http://www.e-mentor.edu.pl/artykul_v2.php?numer=21&id=472, retrieved: 10.07.2009.

²¹⁾ Cf. Por. Por. J. Golonka, op.cit., p. 299.

of the classes. The group were to listen actively and concentrate on what was being said and presented by the teacher²²⁾.

The exercises constituted an integral continuation of the theoretical introduction. The seniors fulfilled a number of tasks "step by step", first according to the guidelines provided by the instructor, and then individually. At this stage emphasis was put on the verbalisation of detailed instructions (e.g. in the lower right corner of the computer screen there is a clock. What time is it?). Furthermore, it was the aim of the teacher to constantly make sure that everyone understood the instructions and completed the exercise correctly. At this stage apart from a regular and careful observation of the members of the group it is important to ask comprehension questions related to the currently discussed subject (e.g. can everyone see what time it is?). It is crucial to encourage the participants of the course to let the teacher know of any problems they might have and to form the habit of addressing the questions directly to the teacher or a voluntary worker (and not to the "neighbour"). Hereby the value of the participation of voluntary workers in the course needs to be emphasised again; their help was truly priceless. Such a way of working with a group allows for a fast and at the same time effective evaluation of the quality of education.

While the participants complete the tasks the teacher must remember about the individualisation of the process of education. The instructor should (as formerly mentioned) be characterised by a flexible approach to the curriculum as well as the choice of teaching methods. It is essential that the pace of the classes be adjusted to the individual abilities and potential of each of the members of the group. That is why preparing various versions of the exercises – for those who work successfully as well as for those who need more time to acquire the particular skills – constitutes a crucial element of the classes.

It is also obligatory that the teacher sums up the entirety of the class and motivates the participants of the course to practice individually outside the class.

Teaching materials

The preparing of teaching materials by the instructors constituted an advantage of the *@ktywny Senior* project. Therefore, all the introduced information was additionally presented in the form of the so-called textbook that was distributed among the participants before the start of the classes. This allowed the seniors to supplement the materials prepared by the instructors according to their own needs which supported the teaching process greatly. The particular subjects were described, explained and presented „step by step”. They were prepared in such a way as to make it possible for all the participants of the course to do the exercises

²²⁾ All the subjects were numerously revised by the seniors, which allowed for providing further explanations, answering questions, and a repeated, individual explanation of the information.

individually at home with the use of the materials received in class. A selection of the materials is included in the supplement.

Conclusion

The above information constitutes a collection of experiences gained during the *@ktywny Senior* project. Nevertheless, the choice of the analysed subjects allows one to notice that the structure of the text is clearly aimed at presenting the so-called "good practice" in the education of seniors. Although many of the issues require improvement the presented computer skills training workshops are a proposition of classes that may be followed as a successful example while preparing computer skills training for seniors.

It also needs to be emphasised that the presented text is yet another attempt at joining the discourse related to the education of people in late adulthood. Providing an answer to the question – how to teach seniors? – requires an ongoing exchange of thoughts and experience gained from conducting activities of numerous types.

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