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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SETTING OF EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES IN THE CONTEXT OF AGE MANAGEMENT AND CSR

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ABSTRACT. Age management plays an important role in addressing the age distribution among employees in an organisation and their management as a result of the increasing share of 50+ people in the population. Organisations must inevitably adapt to this trend, and one of the objectives of age management is to cope with demographic changes. Parties involved in age management have different ambitions at different levels. At the organisational level, however, it is necessary to emphasise on the development of human potential through continuous education and labour productivity. Employee age management can be seen as part of corporate social responsibility. More and more organisations are connecting responsible business with human resource management. The article presents age management as an opportunity to link human resource development to social responsibility. The main objective of this paper is to identify the factors influencing the setting of educational processes for 50+ y.o. employees and to support the development of CSR in education. The data were obtained using quantitative research ($n = 207$) and then evaluated using descriptive and multivariate statistics methods. The results show that employees prefer when employers themselves suggest them participating in educational courses. The most frequently used courses are professional lectures and self-education, while the least used ones are internships in foreign branches or videoconferences.

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M12, M54.

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Introduction

Ciutiene and Railaite (2015) and also Kosi and Soba (2016) defined age management as creating conditions that take into account age at different levels (political, organisational, work process management, physical and social environments). Fabisiak *et al.* (2012) added that the concept is directly related to the population aging, while emphasising its connection with the management of diverse teams. The frequency of individuals in a certain age group indicates the age of both the individuals and the society (Chand and Markova, 2019). Age management

addresses all age categories of employees, however, the 50+ age group is currently the key one considering the most recent trends in demographic and labour market development (Principi and Fabbietti, 2015; Urbancová, 2019).

Legislative bodies address the issues of age management at the sociopolitical level. One example is the Lisbon Strategy, which was adopted by the European Council in March 2000 (Esping-Andersen, 2002, p. 8), and which was aimed at Europe “*becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.*” No key objectives of this strategy have been achieved in the European Union as a whole. In 2010, the Lisbon Strategy was replaced by the EUROPE 2020 Agenda. In Czech Republic, it was primarily the National Action Plan for Positive Aging for the 2013–2017 period, prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the National Action Plan for Corporate Social Responsibility in Czech Republic, which was under the patronage of the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The abovementioned strategic documents support the introduction of age management at the society-wide level, but not at the level of organisations.

However, it is necessary to demonstrate the importance of promoting age management principles in organisations and eliminating negative stereotypes often formed in childhood, as reported by Craciun *et al.* (2012), Palmore *et al.* (1985, 2016) Rooster (1998) dealt with the negative image of seniors in media. Ageism is commented on by Urbancová (2019), or Glover *et al.* (2017) as they listed partial prejudices against older people. Chum (2012) stated that age discrimination concerns primarily unskilled workers. However, according to Urbancová and Hudáková (2017), it should be ensured that every worker has the opportunity to use their potential, as confirmed by Witkowski and Bartozs (2017), Hitka *et al.* (2018) or Durst and Zieba (2019). Garlic *et al.* (2019) state that most older people maintain their normal mental abilities, but reaction time slows down. Jankelová *et al.* (2017); Gerds (2010) or Hitka *et al.* (2020) add that their motor skills deteriorate, they suffer from movement pains, which can make their job performance unpleasant. Chum (2012), on the other hand, demonstrates that employee performance increases with age. An important asset of older workers as compared to the younger ones is their experience, as mentioned, for example, by Faurie *et al.* (2008). Studies list 6 areas related to economic benefits of age management: competitive ability, cost reduction, quality workforce, the optimum mix of skills, organisation’s image, more positive relationship with employees. Furthermore, the following ones can be added: long-term experience in the field, know-how of work procedures, long-term networking, maturity, opinion stability, low employee turnover, time flexibility, lower rivalry, etc.

Galea *et al.* (2014); Huo *et al.* (2019); Stacho *et al.* (2020) divide age management into three key levels – national, organisational and individual. The paper focuses mainly on the organisational level. Monti (2004) deals with age management in organisations and mentions passive, dynamic, and predictive age management that seems to be an effective way of managing human resources. Urbancová (2019) and Monti (2004) agree that age management is not the only universal way of management, but it is growing in strength due to current specific trends in demographic development.

In view of the increasing interactions among different generations, it is necessary to properly set up the organisation's educational processes so that they support the sharing of knowledge and experience among employee generations (Bolisani and Bratianu, 2017; Aydin and Dube, 2018). As methods of education, people often prefer coaching and mentoring, which allows younger generations find their own new paths in their further career growth as well as in their personal lives and, on the other hand, which allows older, more experienced employees have a good feeling about their work, when disseminating their knowledge within the organisation (Urbancová, 2019). By promoting continuous learning and knowledge-sharing among generations of employees, the social responsibility of organisations can purposefully be

developed (Urbancová, 2019). The main aim of this paper is to identify the factors influencing the settings of educational processes for the 50+ y.o. employees and those supporting the development of social responsibility of organisations in the field of education.

The article has six main parts: Introduction (introduction to the topic, topicality of the issue and stating the objective), Literature Review (where opinions of mostly foreign authors on the examined issues are compared), Methodological Approach, Results, Discussion and Conclusion. In the latter part the foreign research results are compared with the presented here results, and also recommendations for organisations are provided.

1. Literature review

An opportunity for education and development can be a motivating factor (Galea *et al.*, 2014; Hitka *et al.*, 2018; Hitka *et al.*, 2020) for all generations of employees, as education and development in the context of human resources management go beyond the boundaries of mere professional competence. It largely involves the formation of employee's personality, that is, the qualities that influence their work behaviour and knowledge, and thus the employee's motivation. Employee development takes place as part of a systematic organisational learning process, whose strategic management elements include identification of needs and evaluation of the effectiveness of development programs (Witkowski and Bartoż, 2017; Aydin and Dube, 2018; Urbancová, 2019). It is necessary to realise that assessing the effectiveness of individual educational methods also depends on the age category of employees (Huo *et al.*, 2019; Chand and Markova, 2019).

Modern methods of education and development in practice include (Angeloni and Borgon, 2016; Wikstrom *et al.*, 2018) job rotation, coaching, mentoring, external and internal education programmes, professional lectures, e-learning, etc. Coaching and mentoring are worthy of more detailed description because, according to the research, these methods of education and development are perceived as the most valuable ones by Generation Y (Gužíková, 2018). The principle of both approaches is repeated one-to-one meetings, where one of the people, in this case, a mentor or coach, uses their specific knowledge to develop the other one. Coaching is considered to be a longer-term method of education and development, taking into account the individual's personality, and the coach systematically encourages and directs the person being educated to the desired work performance and their own initiative. This method is in great demand because it does not only help improve performance but can be a source of personally significant benefits for the coached employee.

Mentoring (Stromei, 2001) differs from coaching mainly in the fact that it takes place as a transfer of experience. It is not so demanding on the mentor's specific skills; in this method the mentor serves as a model for the employee, from whom the employee can learn by observation or always ask the mentor for advice. Very often the mentor's role is taken by an older and more experienced employee who advises, stimulates and helps them in their career.

According to the global surveys, the factor of education and development is the least motivating for the X Generation and the most motivating for the Z Generation. The Deloitte's survey (2018) has shown that 48% of Generation Z representatives and 44% of Generation Y representatives consider education and development to be very important. On the other hand, a study by MetLife (2013), which dealt with Generation X, does not mention the education and development factor as motivation for this generation; it just mentions that only a third of Generations X representatives views insufficient development as a reason for dissatisfaction. Corporate social responsibility is often referred to as CSR. Pavlík *et al.* (2010, p. 19) provides a definition of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development as follows: “*CSR is a continuous commitment of businesses to behave ethically, to contribute to economic growth*

while advocating for improving the quality of life of employees and their families, as well as the local community and society as a whole.”

The European Commission in the Communication on the Renewed Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy for 2011–2014 encourages member states to develop their own CSR strategies. An interesting CSR initiative in the context of age management is the European CSR Europe project called “A New Perspective on Careers: How to Cope with Prolonging Active Working Lives” with the ambition to seek and promote examples of innovation that will help companies to employ people throughout their entire career in the long term. It is also important to note that CSR Europe, in collaboration with member organisations, has provided a tool to measure Age Management – LEA (Galic *et al.*, 2019; Chand and Markova, 2019), which enables to measure, evaluate and map key human resource development processes in the area of age management (Principi and Fabbietti, 2015; Kosir and Soba, 2016; Urbancová and Hudáková, 2017). With LEA, employers get a credible picture of what measures, tools and processes need to be implemented. According to Witkowski and Bartozs (2017) and Urbancová (2019), the topic of age management application at the level of organisations is gaining momentum, which further underlines the current development of the labour market, and helps build a good employer brand (Urbancová and Hudáková, 2017).

2. Methodological approach

The theoretical methods of analysis were used, primary and secondary sources were analysed by synthesis, induction, deduction and comparison. The quantitative data were obtained by a questionnaire survey in the Czech organisations ($n = 207$; quota-based selection). The results can be generalised only for the given control sample. In total, 860 e-mails to owners or management of organisations were sent out, 207 returned, so it can be said that the e-mail return rate was 24.06%. The sample was based on the ALBERTINA database of organisations. Albertina is a unique database that contains important data of more than 2,700,000 organisations registered in the Czech Republic. The questionnaire was completed by middle or higher management of the addressed organisations, in case of smaller organisation by owners themselves (thus the responses reflected the point view of their heads/owners/managers). The questionnaire respected the ethical aspect and the anonymity of respondents. The questionnaire was designed to comply with ethical rules and the requirement for anonymity and contained 18 questions: 13 serving for identification and 5 for research. The questions were closed-ended (allowing only one response) and those allowing more response options. The structure of the organisations, participating in the research ($n = 207$), was as follows (see *Table 1*).

Table 1. Organisations that participated in the research – basic data

Characteristics	Categories			
	Private		Public	
Sector	81.6%		18.4%	
Market	Global	Local	National	Regional
	45.4%	12.6%	27.5%	14.5%
Part of a larger group of organisations	Yes		No	
	44.9%		55.1%	
The size of the organisation (number of employees and %)	1–9	10–49	50–249	250 and more
	21.3%	26.1%	23.2%	29.5%
Existence of HR department	Yes		No	
	54.6%		45.4%	

Source: *own data*

The results were analysed using statistical tools – the dependence test (χ^2) and the power of dependence test (Cramer's V). The significance level value was chosen as $\alpha = 0.05$. Good approximation requirements were always met in the computations, i.e. theoretical frequencies reached the values of more than or equal to 5 in 80% of instances, while they never dropped below 2 in the remaining 20%. The dependence strength was computed using the Cramér's V measure (1) that is within $0 \leq V \leq 1$, irrespective of the contingency table volume:

$$V = \sqrt{\frac{K}{n \times \min(r - 1, s - 1)}} \quad (1)$$

In cases where the determined p -value was below the significance threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$, the null hypothesis was rejected because the research demonstrated a statistical dependence between the qualitative variables. In such cases, the strength of the dependence was determined using the Cramer's V coefficient. The results of the correlation strength were interpreted in accordance with the categories in De Vaus (2014). For the purposes of the dependence test, the responses in the questionnaire were merged into a simplified yes – neutral – no structure. To identify the mutual relationships between variables, we followed up on the results of descriptive statistics with factor analysis (multivariate statistics). In the factor analysis (after the correlation analysis and principal component analysis), we used the Varimax method and the Kaiser-Guttman rule for the selection of substantial factors according to Anderson (2013). Data were processed only if the value of substantial factors was greater than 1; values exceeding 0.3 were considered significant. The statistical software used to evaluate the data was IBM SPSS Statistics 24.

3. Results

The previous research has shown that willingness to educate oneself, i.e. primarily through formal education is decreasing with the increasing age of employees. Studies, such as Urbancová, Hudáková (2017); Jankelová *et al.* (2017), have also stated that employees with lower levels of education tend to be less willing to take part in educational activities. The research results have shown that the economic sector does not influence the use of educational methods for different age categories of employees (p -value = 0.416).

In contrast, the market in which an organisation operates, whether it is part of a larger group of organisations and the size of the organisation affect the setting of the learning process for individual age categories of employees. *Table 2*, which follows, relates to the willingness to learn by all educational methods (both individual and group ones) within all age categories of employees.

The results have shown that 37.2% of respondents are willing to learn and they proactively propose courses. Most respondents are willing to learn regardless of their age, according to the research results, which is positive. Although the total of 87% of respondents in the sample have reported that they do not apply age management for the time being, most organisations that do not yet do so consider applying age management important and plan to use age management principles in the medium term (up to 3 years). The reasons why age management is not yet in place, are as follows: It is because 43% of them do not perceive this activity as important; for 12.1% of them it is financially and time-consuming; 30% of organisations do not have appropriate specialists in the organisation and in 18.8% this area is not supported by the organisational culture of the owner. It can be concluded from the present results that only 22.7% of addressed organisations applying age management have systematically set this activity on the basis of the official set of measures. In total, 22.2% of

respondents (organisations) also encourage sharing, transfer and retention of knowledge and experience in any personnel changes in the organisation, primarily on retirement.

Table 2. Questionnaire survey responses related to the willingness to learn

	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulative relative frequency (%)
Yes, they are willing to learn in the full extent.	49	23.7	23.7
They are willing, but the employer must propose a course.	69	33.3	57.0
They are not willing, but if the employer suggests a course, they will complete it.	11	5.3	62.3
They suggest themselves what courses to study.	77	37.2	99.5
They try to avoid courses.	1	.5	100.0
Total	207	100.0	x

Source: *own data*

Within the surveyed organisations it was also examined how the education of employees was realised (*Table 3*).

Table 3. Characteristics of education in the surveyed organisations

	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency (%)	Cumulative relative frequency (%)
Education is not realised at all.	49	23.7	23.7
It is limited to mandatory training.	10	4.8	4.8
Unplanned, necessary courses are realised at the given moment.	44	21.3	21.3
Permanent education, where internal and external lecturers work directly in the workplace.	20	9.7	9.7
Planned, a series of educational activities is scheduled for a certain period.	53	25.6	25.6
Planned, a series of educational activities is scheduled for a certain period of time with tasks that need to be done in the interim of individual courses.	31	15.0	15.0
Total	207	100.0	100.0

Source: *own data*

Most respondents have agreed that education within the organisation, where they work, is addressed as a planned activity for all employees regardless of age. Furthermore, it was examined what methods of education are used for the 50 + age category in accordance with the demographic and market situation development, see *Table 4*.

Table 4. The intensity of using modern educational methods

Educational method	Absolute frequency (answer yes)	Absolute frequency (answer no)	Relative frequency (answer yes), %	Relative frequency (answer no), %	The use of method depends on the age management application in the organisation
Self-education	113	94	54.6	45.4	0.349
Outdoor learning/training	40	167	19.3	80.7	0.146
Coaching	57	150	27.5	72.5	0.002 (0.211)
Mentoring	51	156	24.6	75.4	0.109
Internet	63	144	30.4	69.6	0.212
Videoconferencing	28	179	13.5	86.5	0.416
E-learning	76	131	36.7	63.3	0.372
Internship at a foreign branch	27	180	13	87	0.129
Workplace rotation	40	167	19.3	80.7	0.146
Professional lectures	124	83	59.9	40.1	0.234
Project work	56	151	27.1	72.9	0.747

Source: *own data*

The results listed in *Table 4* have shown that the most used educational methods of respondents in the 50+ age group are professional lectures, self-education and e-learning. Conversely, the least used ones are foreign internships, e-learning or workplace rotation. Multidimensional statistics, namely the factor analysis, were applied for a deeper analysis in accordance with the methodology. Before performing the factor analysis, we verified the correlation strength of the variables using a correlation matrix. As there was a strong correlation between some variables in the data, we used the factor analysis to find hidden factors. Four important factors have been identified that describe the variables examined (1. Development and knowledge sharing, 2. Internal development of employees, 3. Gaining experience, 4. Elimination of ageism). An overview of the factors is given in *Table 5*. This is a comparison of the variance of the factors with a value of 1 (the four factors whose variance is greater than 1 are included in the factor analysis).

Table 5. Factor analysis of selected variables

Factor	Total variance	Total % of variance	Cumulative % of variance
1. Development and knowledge sharing	3.763	31.360	31.360
2. Internal development of employees	1.143	9.527	40.886
3. Gaining experience	1.093	9.105	49.992
4. Elimination of ageism	1.015	8.456	58.447

Source: *own data*

The factor analysis has identified 4 significant factors combining the analysis variables. The first factor has a strength of approximately 31%, the second is 9.5%, the third is 9.1% and the fourth is 8.5%. The aim was to reduce individual variables to 4 aggregate factors. *Table*

6 below shows the results of the factor analysis in detail. The methods used in organisations in the development of different age categories have been investigated. In *Table 6*, we examine the estimated values of coefficients for each factor variables.

Table 6. Detailed results of the factor analysis

Variable – benefits	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Self-education	0.285	0.752	0.070	-0.046
Outdoor learning/training	0.705	-0.058	0.107	0.165
Coaching	0.597	0.404	-0.118	0.296
Mentoring	0.649	0.310	0.084	0.018
Internet	0.195	0.636	0.092	-0.054
Videoconferencing	0.575	0.168	0.239	-0.340
E-learning	0.456	0.512	0.185	-0.153
Internship at a foreign branch	-0.027	0.165	0.853	0.150
Workplace rotation	0.449	0.073	0.607	-0.047
Professional lectures	-0.126	0.742	0.126	0.146
Project work	0.307	0.356	0.368	-0.406
The organisation applies age management	0.175	0.073	0.160	0.787
Total % of variance	31.360	9.527	9.105	8.456
Name of the factor	Development and knowledge sharing	Internal development of employees	Gaining experience	Elimination of ageism

Source: *own data*

The factor analysis explains the variance of observed variables using a smaller number of latent variables. Each variable in the table (a total of 12 variables) is described by a factor weight, i.e. the correlation value of the item. The higher the correlation, the more the factor is saturated with the variable. In the case of the latent variable - Factor 1, the dominant variable is outdoor learning, in the case of Factor 2 it is self-education, in the case of Factor 3 it is the internship at the foreign branch, and in the case of Factor 4 it is the fact that the organisation deals with age management. Other significant measures of association are in bold. According to the results shown in *Table 6*, the respondents in the sample were divided into four groups. The first group of variables gathers variables dealing with outdoor learning/training (0.705), coaching (0.597), mentoring (0.649), and videoconferencing (0.575). The first factor explains nearly 32% of the sample's behaviour and the coefficient values range from 0.575 to 0.705 (a strong dependence). The first factor can be called “Development and knowledge sharing”. The results indicate that these are organisations already dealing with age management or they want to focus on it in the medium term. They emphasise continuity, a collaboration among generations and promote intergenerational cooperation. Education of all age groups of employees is also important, with mentoring and coaching being the most used ones, as there is also experience sharing and outdoor learning and training, which ensures the application of acquired knowledge and experience in context (action), and thus their appreciation.

The second factor explains almost 10% of the sample's behaviour and is comprised of variables of Internet (0.636), e-learning (0.512) and expert lectures (0.742). Therefore, this factor can be called “Internal development of employees”. The factor includes the educational methods that can be used across all age groups but are more effective for younger generations. The first factor serves for experience sharing among generations of employees.

The third factor includes the following variables: a foreign internship (0.853), workplace rotation (0.607), and project work (0.368). The third factor is called “Gaining experience”. This educational method is primarily suitable for developing knowledge and experience in such a way that these employees then become coaches and mentors in the organisation.

The fourth factor called “Elimination of ageism” includes all age management tools (0.787), it is a strong dependence, with one variable explaining about 9% of the sample behaviour, which demonstrates that the use of tools to eliminate ageism and negative age discrimination helps achieve the benefits for organisations, both at the individual and organisational level.

To sum up, most organisations apply age management to ensure knowledge continuity in personnel changes (37.0% when leaving for competitors and 7.4% because of retirement). There is no statistical dependence between the application of age management and the impetus for its application (p -value = 0.733), nor the dependence between the mid-term plan to start applying age management and the reason for ensuring knowledge continuity (p -value = 0.388); no statistical dependence has been proved between this plan and the sector in which the organisation operates (p -value = 0.664). There has been no statistical dependence between the existence of the HR department and the application of age management (p -value = 0.084) either. Therefore, it can be concluded that age management must be applied in all organisations regardless of any characteristics of the sector, size, market, etc. In the research conducted, the following recommendations can be formulated in the context of the CSR phenomenon:

- to devote time to transfer knowledge when retiring and to integrate new employees;
- to use existing capacities of older employees to avoid disrupting the business continuity, reducing productivity, or even dropping performance;
- to optimise the level and forms of education, use modern methods of development – mentoring, including so-called reverse mentoring, and effectively use coaching;
- to seriously listen to experienced employees and managers and avoid negative stereotypes (ageism);
- to respect experience, loyalty, long-standing contacts, responsibility, discipline, and, above all, decency and humility of this age category,
- to understand customers as they grow older.

In view of the aforesaid, it can be concluded that the primary impulse for applying age management at the organisational level is the need to respond to the demographic development of the population; however, at present it is necessary to increase the ability of organisations to flexibly act in social and labour interactions between employee generations and to ensure intergenerational knowledge sharing. This HRM partial strategy is in line with CSR and helps thus effectively set organisational processes and interactions with the stakeholders of the organisation.

4. Discussion

It is typical for today's developed countries that their population is ageing significantly. It is possible to agree with the conclusions of Principi and Fabbietti (2015); Witkowski and Bartozs (2017); Aydin and Dube (2018) that age management, which represents a management way with respect to age, abilities and potential of employees, is not only an economic challenge, but first of all a social challenge as a comprehensive approach to tackling demographic changes. Targeted measures support health and professional development of employees. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention not only to 50+ employees but to all age categories of employees and to adapt age management activities to various types of occupations and to concentrate on both personal and organisational goals at the organisational level, which is in line with the

conclusions of Urbancová (2019). It is necessary to realise that all age categories of employees must be stimulated by the education and development methods that they can use, which is confirmed by Angeloni and Borgonovi (2016) and Hitka *et al.* (2020). At present, according to the results obtained, these methods are primarily mentoring and coaching; other methods are overshadowed. With respect to the results, it can also be summarised that in relation to work motivation, common methods of education and development are taken for granted and do not lead to the necessary motivation of employees to share knowledge and experience with their colleagues. On the contrary, the positive impact of more experienced workers in the 50+ category can be seen.

Incorporating age management tools into the personnel policy of an organisation can make a big difference to organisations, requiring a certain shift in the thinking of all managers and employees towards perceiving the needs of different age groups and responding to them, as pointed out by Ciutiene and Railaite (2015) and Kosi and Soba (2016). However, it is up to the management of organisations to determine whether the organisation and its management are prepared for this approach and whether they can appreciate and accommodate older employees for their experience.

The general social benefits of age management are obvious. The CSR benefit is, among other things, increased competitiveness. These activities show the organisation in a favourable light to customers-consumers or other stakeholders within the respected responsibility policy. Age management is part of the CSR phenomenon. It must be of interest to the entire organisation to retain its qualifications, performance, productivity, and know-how. It is imperative that organisations work to retain qualifications, know-how and acquired knowledge as part of human resource management.

Conclusion

The results have shown that the organisations in question deal with age management to a lesser extent or want to engage in it in the medium term. The most used methods are mentoring and coaching because they also share experience and then outdoor learning and training, which ensure the application of acquired knowledge and experience in the context (action), and thus their appreciation. Four key factors influencing the setting of educational processes for 50+ employees and supporting the development of CSR in education are identified. These are development and knowledge sharing, internal development of employees, gaining experience and eliminating ageism. The research shows that most organisations apply age management to ensure knowledge continuity in personnel changes.

The main barriers to research include relative inadequate public and organisational awareness of age management, then the unavailability or incompleteness of some publicly available data (CCSO, Eurostat, etc.) in the field of CSR. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account the possibility that some representatives of organisations may tend to improve their situation and behaviour in the research, which is the limit of any realised quantitative research. The impetus for further research in the field of age management is to extend the research in specific regions of the Czech Republic, namely because each region has a different position in business activities and a different approach to resources, including the specifics of regional labour markets.

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