Studies of Development for Senior Citizen Learning Project in Universities and Colleges - Using Taiwan as an Example

Su-feng Chen
Graduate Institute of Adult Education NKNU andTaiwan and Academic Center of Huayen

Wan-chen Hsu
Graduate Institute of Adult Education, NKNU

Studies of Development for Senior Citizen Learning Project in Universities and Colleges—Using Taiwan as an Example

Su-feng Chen, Graduate Institute of Adult Education, NKNU, Taiwan and Academic Center of Huayen

Wan-chen Hsu, Graduate Institute of Adult Education, NKNU, Taiwan

Abstract: The study aims to an in-depth exploration in the implementation for three senior citizen learning projects of boarding learning, short-term learning and semester system plan conducted in universities and colleges in Taiwan. And the implementation status and experience are also analyzed.

Research Background and Objective

Universities in Taiwan, influenced by trends of encouraged installation and upgrades starting during the 70's, are noted with increase in the magnitude which started from 150 schools in academic year 2000 to 163 in 2010. If the university can effectively operate senior citizen learning market segment, it can also be the new opportunity for pioneering the elderly learning and recreate a dawning for university operation. Altbach (2002) of U.S Higher Education indicated the transformation of university academic system aimed to serve different levels of customers with different objectives and should be subsidized differently. More importantly, they had extremely different qualities as well as achievement standards and referred this differentiation as core characteristics for popularizing higher education systems globally.

Ministry of Education here in Taiwan sponsored senior citizen learning projects in universities since 2008 and had trial runs over three different ones including "elderly short-term boarding and learning project" affiliated to boarding project, "happy classroom special project" of short-term advancement program and "happy university project", i.e. university semester learning project program, and had analyzed implementation status, uncovered difficulties and resolution strategies for problems unearthed. It also summarized the operation modes for constructing university's elderly learning project developments which are well worth for future reference in operating elderly education matters.

Research Design and Implementation

In order to further understand the revealed practical outlines from senior citizen learning operated at universities, this study adopted the in-depth interview approach and proceeded to dialogues and analysis as opposed to relevant literature and information in advanced countries. Recently the Ministry of Education opted to project subsidy approach and had three different elderly learning projects tried out at all universities. In three years, we had participated and sponsored 56 universities & colleges and samples collected is based upon region allocations from

north, central, south and east. Interviewees were project administrators or those who actually implemented which included 6 schools in the north, 5 in central, 7 in south, 3 in east with 25 persons from 21 schools total. Through the interview topics we proceeded to content analysis in a word by word fashion to understand the experience and problem in processing elderly learning projects. Adult education development mode structure from many domestic and foreign scholars were compared and they were primarily from Knowles'(1980) adult education project planning, Caffarella's (1994) interactive and adult education project planning mode, Boone's (1985) development mode, and Kotler's (1995) market strategy mode. Afterwards, the design for interview outlines were constructed according to 5 dimensions like scenario analysis, objective setting, market planning, implementation and assessment to serve as the core of interview and are detailed as follow:

Table 1: Research interview outlines for implementation experience of elderly learning project at universities and colleges

Dimension	Structural content
Scenario analysis	What are current statuses as opposed to internal resource and external environment? Difficulties and problems encountered? How to resolve and other notions?
Objective setting	In project planning, how to set the target for idea and concept? School or individual beliefs? Current operation status? Difficulties and problems encountered? How to resolve and other ideas?
Activity planning	As for aspects from organization and administration processing manpower, operation, support from the superior, how are learning curriculum designed? Current implementation status? Difficulties and problems encountered? How to resolve and other available approaches?
Implementation	From the prospective like marketing strategy, how the implementation manpower, material support and financial expenditures, etc, teacher's teaching and student learning activities are proceeded?
Assessment	What are the impacts and changes rendered to senior citizen students, school administration staffs, teachers and students?

Interview information processing includes: interview content recording and interview daily log, reflection and notes which were transcribed word for word in addition to compilation and information analysis. Research information sources were primarily in two categories: (1) Based upon interview content; (2) Reflections and notes from the interviews, case-closed reports from schools, satisfaction level survey and related documents from Ministry of Education as references. Senior citizen education has been the academic forte of this researcher. During research process, this researcher continued researching for related documentations in addition to evaluating information orientation as well as the adaptability for repeatedly discussed compilation. In conjunction with field trip notes, notes and relevant reference documents, this author analyzed the consistency for different information. And it was followed with repeated discussion so as to

acquire the contextual understanding in order to meet credibility, transferability, confirmability requirements (Huang & Jian, 1991).

Research findings
First: Scenario analysis findings for senior citizen learning project development in universities and colleges

Project development mode focuses on the preplanned scenario analysis and exterior environmental analysis findings. Since Taiwan general environment for senior citizen market has been matured and the transportation gap between metropolitan, rural regional environment is huge, therefore what differs internationally is that there is an excessive growth witnessed for Taiwan universities and the fact that supply outpaces demand results with recruitment obstacles for schools especially those locate at rural area and far away from counties and cities. Hence the competing schools can cooperate with each other instead. Internal resource analysis findings revealed that Taiwan was still in the trial phases and unable to distinctly regulate the universities undertaking the projects of happy senior citizen education system or organization. And each school is defined at various levels, and admin organization integrations and supports are also varied. Public school can acquire ample local government resources whereas private schools normally are controlled by the board members of enterprise and conglomerate resources. Common issue anchors to the fact that "senior citizen boarding" lacks of comprehensive planning and proper equipments therefore risk management enhancement is in order.

Second: The objective orientation for project development of senior citizen learning in universities and colleges

Instead of following the path laid down by countries promoting for senior citizen learning, Taiwan schools initially had placed themselves in passive role of promotion; consolidated planning originated from Ministry of Education. Most of schools or operators did not have individual faith and objective in mind.

Third: Activity planning for project development for senior citizen learning in universities and colleges t

This research unearthed that each school prioritizes learning activity title design, implementation and planning procedure and innovative requirements in the curriculum. Project title has an edge in advertizing if equipped with creativity in addition to relay characteristics from idea and logo of departments and schools. Next, in our implementation experience, we witnessed that it tended to release the elderly in the mind and soul for life and death concerns through story sharing.

Fourth: Implementation for project development of senior citizen learning in universities and colleges

As for operating organization, Taiwan has not institutionalized this therefore each school is found with four operating departments for implementation; and promotion and education departments are found as the most likely one with ratio over 50% and it has the capacity of consolidating both admin and departmental teaching resources. Next followed with general department and school or its affiliated center; thirdly, it is the adult education department or background; nonetheless few are found as general education center. With implementation team, our interviews revealed that all school operators were part-time and only few were dedicated staff. And there had been none "full-time" staff found. Senior citizen education project funding was still handled through special project subsidies here in Taiwan whereas the subsidy amount was decreasing annually. This research found that metropolitan area utilized website, etc, the so called technological tools as media marketing with good results, thereby rural area needs community partner relationship as well as primarily word-of-mouth marketing.

Fifth: Assessment for project development of senior citizen learning at universities and colleges
Some students indicated that with happiness from learning. They were brave in facing the fact of aging, learning to establish new relationship, resolve family member's cohabiting issues, uncover higher social values to live out with dignity; and these are exactly the mission and objective for senior education. As for influence and change to school, with massive influx of the elderly to campus, it did cause extreme impact. University has new found student source and can serve as the lead for community relation and strengthen the capacity to serve the elderly. The following figure 1 depicts overall implementation work structure for senior citizen learning project operated at universities.
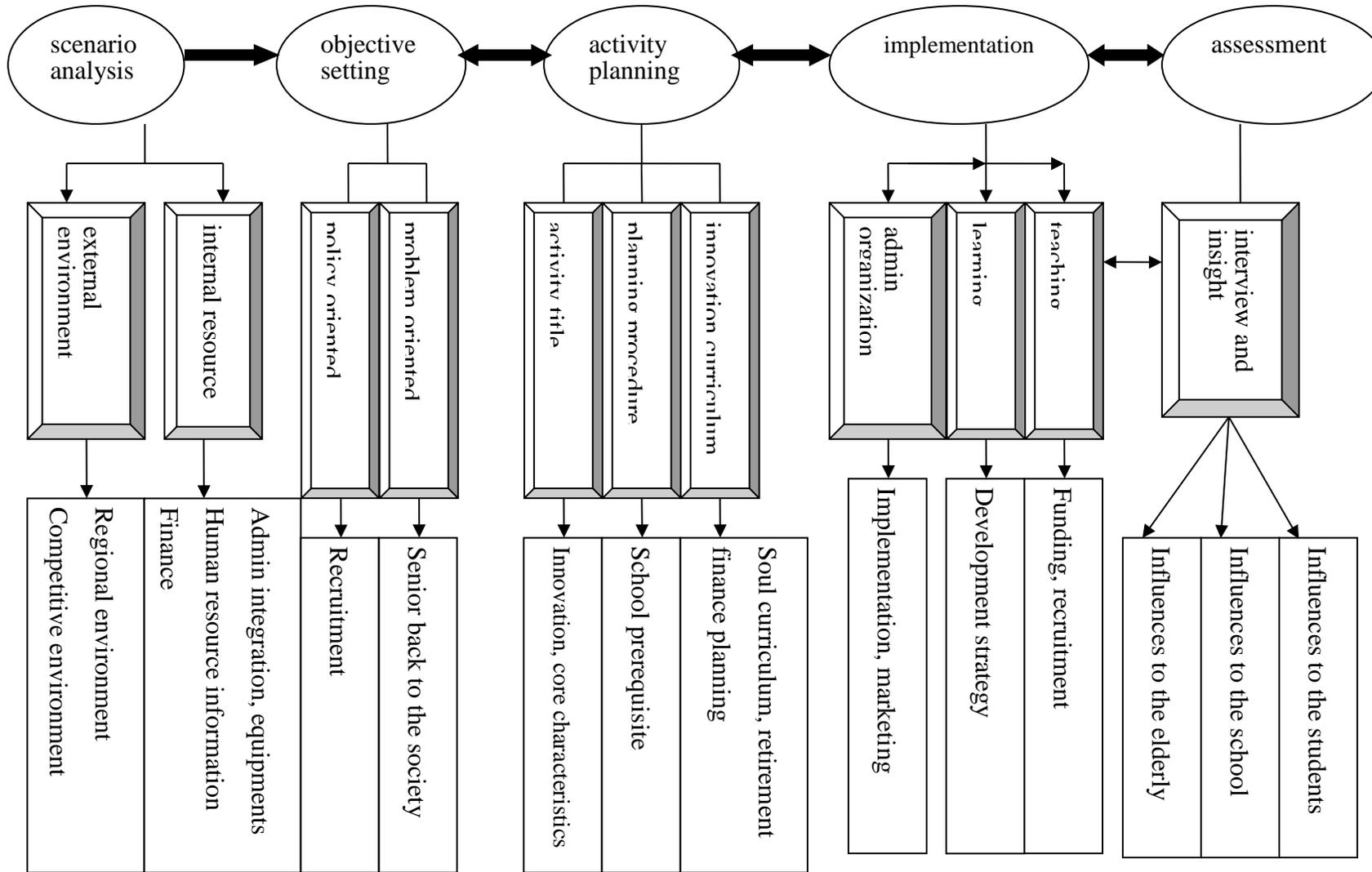
Figure 1: University senior citizens learning program implementation structure

Recommendations

As for the resolution strategy for admin difficulties confronted in operating senior citizen learning at Taiwan universities and colleges, private schools promote educational departments with enterprise operation. School installation is solely tasked to be responsible for the senior learning platform which plans as a whole for admin and teaching, or outsources operation could be the future operation type. Learning mechanism design also would be compatible to Taiwan local cultural trend and the elderly needs with transformation for innovation, experimentation, entertainment, dialogue and practice, etc. It can highlight the university operated senior citizen learning's uniqueness to the market and devotion. From the education governing authority perspective, currently it has already begun the planning for training senior citizen education teaching talents and project managers.

Reference

Altbach, P. G. (2002). Differentiation requires definition: The need for classification in complex academic systems. *International Higher Education*, Winter, pp. 1-2.

Boone, E. J. (1985). *Developing programs in adult education.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Caffarella, S. D. (1994). *Planning programs for adult learners: A practical guide for educators, trainers, and staff developers.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Huang, G. S., & Jian, M. F. (1991). *Education research methodology*. Taipei City: Shi Ta Book Store.

Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education*. Prentice Hall Regents, Englewood Chiffs, NJ.

Kotler, P. K., & Fox, K. F.(1995). *Strategic marketing for educational institutions* (2[nd]Ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hal.