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**ARE OLDER LEARNERS SATISFIED WITH THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING COURSES'?****JUI-YING HUNG****ASST. PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF GOLDEN-AGER INDUSTRY MANAGEMENT****CHAOYANG UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY****TAIWAN****FENG-LI LIN****ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF ACCOUNTING****CHAOYANG UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY****TAIWAN****WEN-GOANG, YANG****ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF LEISURE SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING & LOGISTICS  
MANAGEMENT****CHAOYANG UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY****TAIWAN****ABSTRACT**

*In view of Taiwan currently has the occasion into a "super-aged" society and pulse of trends in the development of camouflage from the overall environment. Policy and practice are moving away from passive assistance programs, such as long-term care insurance, towards a focus on concepts such as "positive aging" and "healthy aging". Government agencies are seeking to integrate existing resources and expertise to create a more complete image of the "silver" industry, energy and national competitive advantage of social. This investigation examines research on senior education and senior citizens' needs, and proposes a suitable course curriculum that allows their integration. In conclusion, it proposed integrated with learning and learning needs of senior citizens to meet the curriculum of course simulation.*

**KEYWORDS**

Senior education, Intergenerational learning, Aging School.

**INTRODUCTION**

In 1993, the number of senior citizens over 65 years of age comprised more than 7% of Taiwan's total population, which is considered the threshold of an aging population. This figure increased to 10.43% in 2008, underlining Taiwan's increasingly changing age structure. At present, the baby boomer generation born after World War II are about to become senior citizens and the phenomenon of population aging will become even more apparent. The ratio of the elderly population is predicted to rise to 11.6% (2,370,000 persons) in 2014, 16.54% (3,920,000 persons) in 2021; and up to 20% by 2025, which equates to one in every five persons being a senior citizen. The ratio will reach that of developed countries, such as the UK, the US and France (Council for Economic Planning and Development, Executive Yuan, 2006). In addition to rapid aging, life expectancy is also increasing. The life expectancies of men and women in Taiwan in 2008 were 75.49 and 82.01, respectively. These changes have given rise to various challenges for government and countries with aging populations, including helping senior citizens to achieve the goal of active aging, as well as planning and management of elderly human resources (Wu, Chen & Yang, 2008).

Population aging is an inevitable change in many countries. The United Nations considers health and well-being as two important issues relating to the elderly (Ministry of Interior, 2009:3). In 1991, the United Nations launched the "Proclamation on Aging," which declared five major principles relating to the elderly: "independence, participation, care, self-realization, and dignity". It also announced 1999 as the "International Year of Older Persons," to encourage countries to move towards a society that is accepting of all age groups. The World Health Organization (WHO) proposed an active aging policy structure in its report, defining active aging as seeking optimal development opportunities in the aging process for individual health, social participation and social safety, to enhance the quality of life of the elderly (WHO, 2002). In 2007 WHO gathered the experimental results of the global "Age-Friendly Cities Project, AFPP" and announced eight development indexes: house, traffic, outdoors space and building planning, social participation, communication and message media, citizen participation and employment, social respect, social support and medical services, hoping to actively enhance the daily lives of the elderly, eliminate obstacles in their environment, and increase their opportunities for social participation (Ministry of Interior, 2009:3). It hopes to (1) provide the elderly with diversified lifelong learning channels by integrating society, education, medicine and relevant resources; (2) encourage the elderly to participate in learning by encouraging colleges and institutes to provide appropriate continuing education courses; (3) ensure the learning rights of the elderly and motivate their desire to learn by organizing suitable educational materials and methods and by developing and promoting diversified courses. These goals are targeted to help seniors towards active and successful aging.

Research into education and learning activities among the aged in various countries has found that the preferred learning style is that which involves attending colleges. This model operators in partnership with colleges, using their qualified teachers and facilities to provide the elderly high quality diversified education at a low cost. This benefits not only the seniors, but also the teachers and students obtain a rich experience from intergenerational learning. In order to encourage colleges and institutes to provide education for the elderly as a social service, in 2008 the Ministry of Education identified 13 colleges in its strategy to provide a "short term hosted learning program for the elderly". To further the benefits of this policy and in line with the "service program of friendly care for the elderly" proposed by the Ministry of Interior in 2009, the Ministry of Education will continue to promote and encourage colleges to run the "Happy Learning Courses Program".

"Happy Learning Courses" are education courses aimed at providing seniors with high quality diversified education. They integrate college software and hardware facilities, teachers and learning resources to operate as an important learning channel for the elderly in Taiwan. Planning and practice in aged education courses must take into account the physical, psychological and mental states of the elderly, and this article aims to share and discuss the experience of our department in meeting these needs through Happy Learning Courses. We hope that this study will provide a reference for colleges and providers in the planning and hosting of future learning programs for the elderly.

## PRACTICE METHODS AND TYPES OF ELDERLY LEARNING

### PRACTICE METHODS IN ELDERLY EDUCATION

After a comprehensive survey of practicing aged education institutions in Taiwan, Huang (2008:162-166) categorized the practice methods of aged education of the past 20 years into the following: senior citizen centers operated by department of social politics, community colleges for the elderly or aged learning centers held by education sectors, senior universities held by non-government organizations and elderly education institutions operated by religious groups. The four types of aged education practice methods are illustrated below: a. Senior citizen centers held by department of social politics; b. Community colleges or aged education learning centers held by education sectors; c. Senior universities held by non-government organizations and d. Elderly education institutions held by religious groups.

Announced by the Ministry of Education in 2006, "Moving towards aged society: white paper on senior education policy," is the most physical, profound and systematic policy statement that has allowed aged education policy and promotion in Taiwan to move toward a new milestone. In order to accomplish the four objectives of lifelong learning, health and happiness, self-dignity and social participation, the white paper specifically established 11 physical action approaches for elderly education policies. "Establish learning locations for elderly education" is one example of this approach, and in 2008 the Ministry of Education planned to establish "Learning Resource Centers" to offer daytime courses for senior citizens in 368 towns and cities across Taiwan. At the same time, since 2008, the Ministry of Education has encouraged and counseled colleges to create "learning project plans" for aged education learning channels and opportunities to develop more diversified elderly education and lifelong learning.

### TYPES OF ELDERLY EDUCATION

There are numerous ways of categorizing different types of aged education. Eisen (1998) used "credit and non-credit courses" as the vertical axis and "learner-centered and teacher-centered" as the horizontal axis. Aged learning types were divided into four quadrants: credit study, convenience, personal interest, and socialization. The main characteristics of courses in the first quadrant are credit courses with a teacher-centered basis, including diploma courses, specialty courses, certification courses, general education, and continuing education. The courses in the second quadrant emphasize convenience, and remote education is a known representative of this type. The third quadrant includes socialization courses, and provides the most diversified aged learning services. The main characteristic of the fourth quadrant is the emphasis on choice of learning according to learner interests; there is a wide range of course formats, including libraries, networks, clubs, volunteers' associations and retirees' commissions. The subject of this paper, Happy Learning Courses, is similar to a hostel for the elderly. It can be categorized as aged learning in the third quadrant, with non-credit learning courses designed on a teacher-centered basis.

## COURSE DESIGN OF HAPPY LEARNING COURSES – TAKE THE CASE OF CHAOYANG UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY IN TAIWAN

### COURSE KEY DESIGNING HINTS

The main concept of course designing in this study is based on the selection patterns of intergeneration learning and activities proposed by Ames and Youatt (1994), including: a. Emphasis on directivity: "intergeneration learning" stresses directivity, focusing on one generation helping another in their learning, such as older learners providing children and adolescents with life perspectives and sharing their experiences; b. "Intergeneration learning" courses are directed and planned by organizations for specific purposes, such as to allow different generations to make contact with each other to enhance understanding and cultivate positive active attitudes, and these courses usually are encouraged by government policies; c. Emphasis on learning contents: intergeneration learning usually does not stress learning contents and there purpose is not to the dissemination of course material, instead, the learning results emphasized are guidance, counseling and assistance between different generations.

The academic calendar at Happy Learning Courses includes events and activities that are based on the responsibilities and events of university students. These include new student registration, opening ceremony, the dedicated mentor and senior system, student ID issuance, inter-school (department) competition, field visits, Christmas events (e.g. caroling, charity sales and Christmas parties), graduation photos, closing ceremony, certificates of completion, awards for perfect attendance and yearbooks. These important events form the most unforgettable memories of college life in the hope of linking the college education experience of older students in the program to experience a rich and diverse college life, participants can also gain useful knowledge and skills to assist in healthy living, and form valuable life memories through positive experience, contributing towards the goal of healthy aging.

### COURSE DESIGN FEATURES

The Happy Learning Courses program divides courses into six core groups: health promotion, retrospective treatments, spiritual communication, life application, education experience, and intergeneration interaction (Table 1).

TABLE 1: PLANNING KEYS OF CORE GROUPS OF HAPPY LEARNING COURSES

Core groups	Course target
Health promotion	Teaching the elderly about healthy aging, allowing them to learn basic skills and habits for independent health management and to enhance their quality of life in order to prevent or decrease the occurrence of chronic diseases and other complications.
Retrospective treatments	Encouraging the elderly to remember and share personal experiences through a group process of retrospection, using positive thinking to enhance self-confidence and self-dignity.
Spiritual communication	Through a process of communication and encouragement, helping the elderly to maintain spiritual positive thinking and openness when facing issues related to aging.
Life application	Focusing on situations that can be encountered in the daily lives of the elderly, for example: fraud, table manners, and practical English. Also teaching the elderly overcome difficulties in life arising from aging, for example: life auxiliary application and barrier-free house design to bring more enjoyment and convenience to their lives.
Experience education	Through field education, helping elders to expand their horizons and experience the outdoors, ranging from nature to cultural locations, such as museums, art museums and shooting sites of TV operas, in order to achieve the goal of learning through leisure.
Intergeneration interaction	Allowing elders to re-live the passion and energy of youth through interaction with students in group activities and lectures, as well as stimulating their brainpower, thinking and memory abilities through mind-related games, which can help fight the onset of senile dementia and memory loss.

Course planning follows the university course model, which preliminarily divides courses into essential component courses and more flexible, elective courses. Furthermore, in order to allow the older students in the "Happy Learning Courses" program to experience interactions with younger students, the division of courses adds uniqueness to the planning of courses and value creativity after their active participation. The course design method is based on course style (dynamic and static), activity method (educational absorption and thought sharing) and practice environment (in-school and on the field). Courses with different characteristics are combined in order to allow participants to learn content effectively through a variety of designs and methods, contributing towards the goal of mental and physical health in aging.

## THE ANALYSIS OF COURSE SATISFACTION

### BASIC DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, learning satisfaction surveys were issued to elder participating in Happy Learning Courses in Chaoyang University of Technology in Taiwan. There were 169 questionnaires issued, and 152 valid questionnaires were returned, giving a recovery rate of 89.9%. This section processes the descriptive statistics analysis for the recovered questionnaires, using a frequency allocation table and percentage analysis to present the demographic information of the participants

in order to understand their background, including gender, age, and educational level. The descriptive statistics of the elderly participants in Happy Learning Courses are shown in Table 2.

**TABLE 2: THE BASIC VARIABLE ANALYSIS OF THE ELDERLY DEMOGRAPHIC (n=152)**

Background variables	Basic Information	No. of people	Percentage
Gender	Male	36	23.7%
	Female	116	76.3%
Age	Over 60 but not yet 70	74	48.7%
	Over 70 but not yet 80	57	37.5%
	Over 80	21	13.8%
Education level	Illiterate	24	15.8%
	Elementary school graduated (studied)	46	30.3%
	Graduated from junior high school	43	28.3%
	Graduated from high (vocational) school	24	15.8%
	Graduated from university (college)	15	9.9%

As shown in Table 2, the gender distribution of elderly participants in Happy Learning Courses is unequal, with females accounting for 76.3%, while male account for only 23.7%. In terms of age, the majority of participants are "over 60 but not yet 70" (48.7%), followed by "over 70 but not yet 80" (37.5%) and "over 80" (13.8%). "Elementary school graduated (studied)" is the most common education level (30.3%).

#### **SATISFACTION ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATION, INFORMATION CHANNELS AND PARTICIPATION FEES AT HAPPY LEARNING COURSES**

The most common learning motivations of elderly participants in Happy learning Courses are the expectation to experience college life, an attractive curriculum design, and the possibility of applying with friends. A few participants were lacking in daily activities at home, which led them to apply. The applicants become aware of Happy Learning Courses through posters posted by public authorities and staff from the local elderly courses. A small number obtained relevant information from newspapers, the internet, and broadcast media. In regards to participant satisfaction with fees, 91% considered the fees reasonable, 6% thought that there was room for raising the price to between NT \$ 1,000 ~ \$ 1,500, and 3% of the participants believed the cost was too high.

#### **THE CURRENT STATUS SATISFACTION ANALYSIS OF HAPPY LEARNING COURSE PARTICIPANTS**

This section shows the analysis of the overall learning satisfaction of elderly participants in Happy Learning Courses over six main categories: health promotion, nostalgia therapy, spiritual communication, daily application, education experience, intergenerational interaction, and overall satisfaction (Table 3):

**TABLE 3: LEARNING SATISFACTION ANALYSIS OF HEALTH PROMOTION (n=152)**

Course name	Average	Standard deviation	Rank
Health Promotion	4.4	.72	4
Nostalgia Therapy	4.5	.58	3
Spiritual Communication	4.2	.70	5
Daily Application	4.2	.83	5
Education Experience	4.9	.54	1
Intergenerational Interaction	4.7	.71	2

\* represents the highest average point

In this final section, this study evaluates the overall satisfaction of elderly participants in Happy Learning Courses held by the School on the items "satisfaction with teaching contents," "satisfaction with activity time control," "satisfaction with planning and conduct of activities," "satisfaction with staff (student services)," "satisfaction with the arrangements of the school classroom," "satisfaction with refreshments provided," "satisfaction with accommodation arrangements" and "overall satisfaction for this activity." (Table 4)

**TABLE 4: OVERALL COURSE SATISFACTION ANALYSIS (n=152)**

Course name	Average	Standard deviation	Rank
Satisfaction with teaching contents	4.7	.47	3
Satisfaction with activity time control	4.5	.52	5
Satisfaction with planning and conduct of activities	4.8	.44	2
Satisfaction with staff (student services)	4.8	.62	2
Satisfaction with arrangements of the school classroom	4.6	.65	4
Satisfaction with refreshment provided	4.6	.70	4
Satisfaction with accommodation arrangements	4.5	.64	5
Overall satisfaction for this activity	4.9	.57	1

Note: \* represents the highest average point

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **Schedule**

Every morning, elderly participants in Happy Learning Courses begin with a blood pressure and body temperature check conducted by school staff at 8:00am. To allow for the slower pace of the elderly, the schedule is somewhat loose, with the first class starting at 8:20am to allow participants some spare time to go to the bathroom or chat with other students after the health check.

Curriculum planning at Happy Learning Courses needs to take into account elderly participants' physical and mental clock to avoid body overloading, such as sedentary, limb paralysis and confined space. This can lead to a loss of motivation and attention, and have a detrimental effect on learning, detracting from the original purpose of the courses.

#### **Curriculum Planning**

According to the main idea of "Happy Learning Education" promoted by the Ministry of Education to provide the local elderly with local real estate, public and educational resources. Since those who participated in Happy Learning Courses held by universities and colleges are mostly local residents, in practice-oriented implementation the content and core objectives of curriculum design should focus on the integration of both the institution's resources and local cultural features for a more unified, systematic approach. Happy Learning Courses should also implement a "customer-oriented" focus when planning the curriculum and in activity design to increase participant learning satisfaction and promote Happy Learning Courses through positive word of mouth.

#### **Diet**

Diet is an important component of healthy aging and quality of life in longevity. Studies by the World Health Organization have shown that it is important to maintain healthy eating habits in addition to regular exercise. The reduce the intake of greasy and fried foods, which are not recommended for the elderly, we particularly ask the caterers not to use too much oil and salt.

**SUGGESTIONS***The importance of invisible spiritual interaction and appreciation of life meaning courses*

The knowledge base, living history, and cultural heritage shared by the elderly provide a valuable learning model for young people. Therefore, elderly education services that promote interaction between elderly and younger students can encourage the elderly to share their life stories and relive nostalgic memories and other experiences with younger students. This can help the elderly to remember and rethink memories that may otherwise have been missed or forgotten, and to share their experiences orally through the process of re-organization and interaction with others. Sharing life stories could help the elderly to adopt a more positive attitude towards the issues in their lives, and encourages young people to have greater respect and appreciation in their own lives.

*Allow students in relevant departments the opportunity to experience practical learning*

to strengthen the implementation of the "intergenerational learning" in elderly education, organizations and institutions such as universities, community colleges, and the Happy Learning Resource Center work to increase practical opportunities for older students to interact with other generations of learners, and to achieve learning objectives such as "practice while learning" and "learning from practicing." Practical intergenerational learning can also help to reduce stereotyping, and encourages elderly people to be more proactive and independent, as well as benefiting from younger students' vitality and new ideas.

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