

The Management of University of Third Age Driven by the Elderly: A Case Study of the Third Age University in Chiang Rai Province

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Abstract: *The University of Third Age of Chiang Rai Province interested by educators and government sectors from many regions of Thailand. There are more than fifteen groups of visitors came to visited and study in the area of institute management and education management for elderly in a year. The purposes of the study were emphasized in investigating the management style of the third age university of Chiang Rai province and to propose some guidelines in managing the third age university driven by elderly. A phenomenological qualitative research study was conducted with ten executives of the university and ten leaders of the student in the University of Third Age in Chiang Rai province. In-depth interview was chosen as the main data collection technique. The instrument used in this study was an interview guide developed by the researchers and Atlas.ti 7.0 was used to analyze the data. The finding showed that there were several factors which leded the university run their institute effectively which consisted of emphasizing on the happiness of both employees and students, creating self-awareness, utilizing the management model to manage the institute, having the good interaction between lecturers, officers, executive, and students, working as a team, having a respect and good authority, having respect for the rules, having a public mind, having stability of tenure of personnel, and providing courses which meet the needs of elderly. This study could be the starting point which leads other third age university or learning centers for the elderly to provide their employees, lecturers, and students with the necessary support to increase the quality in the future.*

Keywords: The University of Third Age, Elderly, Education for Elderly, U3A, Lifelong Learning

Introduction

Since advances the medical profession and public health of the country had occurred, the number of population growth gradually decreasing continuously. The number and proportion of the elderly population are increasing rapidly until Thailand becoming a country of aging society where had the elderly more than ten percent of the country. However, Thailand society has already begun to prepare in advance by providing a country (Thailand National Statistical Office, 2010) At present, the promotion of quality of life for the elderly in Thailand still no provision. Although Thailand provided the laws related to the welfare of the elderly, but that policy still questionable that if that could be beneficial or provide equal protection for the quality of life of the elderly. Caring for the elderly is very crucial for the society because the elderly is the one who needs to adapt to various changes and losses such as occupation, income, marital status, friends, body strength and the appearance. In the condition of losses would affect to elderly's mind they might feel sad, lonely, and lack of dependence then could reduce self-awareness (Veraphong, 2011). Department of Older Persons Thailand (2017) designated the policy as the elderly plan in year B.E. 2545 – 2564. The policy aims to raise awareness in preparation of becoming a quality elderly person by educating, providing some necessary environment and providing health care center, etc. for the elders in Thailand. Promoting lifelong learning to elders is very important, pre-retirement programs were established in both organization ad education

institute. These education programs were set for those elders in terms of economics, financial physical, and mental health care (Wongsith and Sririboon, 1999). The first University of the Third Age (U3A) movement began in 1982. It's developed a lifelong learning concept based on skill sharing, mutuality, and inclusion (U3A, 2018). University of third age has established in many countries especially in the western. The first U3A in Australia was developed in Melbourne in 1984. The U3A movement firstly spread rapidly through Victoria, and later throughout the whole country (U3A Network Victoria, 2004). According to Joseph (2006, p. 3), "U3A has become Australia's fastest growing educational movement." U3A experiences which had contributed in various areas of their lives leading to personal, mental, social and physical enhancement. It emerged that U3A is an important means of enhancing the quality of life for older adults through the provision of lifelong education (Aged and Community Planning Services, 2008). The first U3A in Thailand was established in January 18, 2013 by the initiation of the Department of Lifelong Education, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. The objectives of this U3A is to promote lifelong learning of elderly to well-being society, to enhance to enhance the occasion of lifelong learning for the quality of life of elderly, to propagandize the news and data of Thai elderly to the society of global networks, to manage academic activities and national and international conference to enhance the ability of learning administration and management for the elderly, and to be the center of network in learning management for the elderly (U3A Thailand, 2018). Nonetheless, the University of Third Age is still not enough for the elderly population in Thailand especially in the northeast of Thailand where far from Bangkok 791 kilometers. There are over 180,002 of the elderly population in Chiang Rai, accounted for 18 percent of the total population in the year 2017 (Provincial Statistical Report of Chiang Rai, 2019). In the year 2017, many government sections in Chiang Rai were tried to established the learning center for the elderly, by the end of the year they invest the amount of money and established 80 learning centers for the elderly (Department of Social Development and Welfare Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, 2018). The University of Third Age of Chiang Rai is the most successful, and this institution is interested by many fields of people from every region of Thailand while other institute could not be done easily. Thus, this study aims to investigate the factors which lead the "Third Age University of Chiang Rai" to be a success and hopefully that this study would be a part which could help to guideline others third age institute to know what are the factors which could develop their elderly learning center.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the management style of the third age university in Chiang Rai province and to propose some guidelines for managing the third age university driven by Elderly of Thailand.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study were: 1) what are the factors which lead the Third Age University to be a success, and 2) how do the elderly participate in driving the organization to be stronger?

Literature Review

Successful Education Institute

The successful education needs to emphasis of learning management, this supported by Duangpummes and Kaewurai (2017) they claimed that learning management in Thai education 4.0 with Active learning. It organizes learning activities that hold the learner and the problem is important, allowing learners to express their engaging behaviors in learning activities continuously. The successful institute needs to lead learners to use multiskilled and collaborate in learning and responsibility for their roles. Use the ability to communicate. Transcribe thoughts through writing, debate, argue, give reasons, discuss and express opinions, and expect students to be creative in solving problems from various situations until creating innovation that can meet the needs of the community and society.

Third Age University and Education for Elderly

The University of the Third Age has a worldwide presence. There are a lot of elderly people around the world who retired and stay at home. These people just sit in their seats and do nothing, this might seem fun in the beginning but after some time it starts to get frustrating (AIU3A, 2018). The U3A or the University of the Third Age gives a lot of people a platform to spend their retired life. The University of the Third Age movement began in 1982. The three founders, Peter Laslett, Eric Midwinter and Michael Young developed a lifelong learning concept based on skill sharing, mutuality, and inclusion. Having explored the Université du Troisième Age in France, the founders wanted to stretch the concept so that it was learner led rather than being dependent on having a university lead or host (Chotika, 2018). With the rapid development of population aging, elderly education is an important strategic choice to improve the life of the elderly and promote socioeconomic continual development (Ying, 2009). The development of Aged Education is significant for both the development of the country and the development of elders own. Since the emergence of the elderly university, it is a benefit for the elderly to gain new knowledge and need, and it also solved the social problems of the elderly. Karola explored the contributions of the U3A to the educational needs of a sample of older adults and evaluated the benefits they perceived from their participation in U3A activities. The findings indicated that responding members were very satisfied with their U3A experiences and reported that U3A had made "substantial" differences in their lives. Male and female respondents saw personal, mental, social, and physical improvement as a result of their U3A participation; 96.2 percent indicated that participation had improved their intellectual development. There were significant differences in the perceptions of male and female participants. Female U3A members outnumbered males by three to one. Both the presidents and the members expressed some programmatic concerns, primarily obtaining tutors and classroom availability (Hebestreit, 2007). Trudeau studied on the topic "Elder perceptions of higher education and successful aging" the finding confirmed that there were many opportunities which promote successful aging of elders in a higher education affiliated retirement community and aging is enhanced by the safety of the setting and access to physical care; continuing education; dining facilities; socialization; intergenerational engagement; and the general disposition of intellectualism in the setting. In addition, the educational requirement results in self-selection of residents with interest in intellectual matters and continued learning that is then accentuated within the community culture. Conclusions include that more institutions of higher education should consider similar models, with careful attention to issues of enhancing both funding sources and opportunities for diversity within the program (Trudeau, 2009).

Research Methodology

This research chose a constructivist paradigm and aimed to investigate the factors that enhance the quality of the Third Age University in Chiang Rai Province driven by the elderly to be successful. Thus, a qualitative research methodology with phenomenological strategy was chosen as the research methodology. Creswell (1998) suggested that the phenomenological strategy could help to understand the essence of experiences about a phenomenon. Its discipline originated from philosophy, sociology, and psychology. The participants of this study were 10 people from the executive committee and 10 leaders of the student in the Third Age University all of the participants were elderly who had the age over 60 years.

Data Collection

According to Creswell (2007, p. 117), "data collection offers more instance for assessing research design within each approach to inquiry". Creswell suggested a circle of interrelated activities which consisted of 1) locating a site and individual, 2) gaining access and making rapport, 3) sampling purposefully, 4) collection data, 5) recording information, 6) exploring field issues, and 7) storing data.

To identify the population and participants in this study, the researchers followed the steps of data collecting activities suggested by Creswell (2007) and the detailed descriptions are presented below.

1) Locating a site and individual: the researcher determined the number of population and their locations.

Table 1 Number of the leaders of students who were participants per course

Courses in the university	Number of student leader
Religious	1
Arts and Culture	2
Environment	1
Technology and Communications	2
Tourism	1
Social and Happiness	1
Health Care	1
Economics	1
Total	10

Source: Developed by researchers (2019)

2) Gaining access and making rapport provided a formal letter explaining about the details in the study, research purpose, and data collection methods. The consent letters from Faculty of Management Science, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University were sent to the all participants who are both working in executive board and leaders of students in Third Age University, Chiang Rai.

3) Sampling purposefully, this step aimed to identify the participants' characteristics.

4) Collection data, the researchers conversed with participants as we call in-depth interview. The interview place was the Third Age University, Chiang Rai, the researchers asked the participants to recommend a private room to ensure that the conversation would be not interrupted by others.

5) Recording information, the researchers asked for each participant to allowed to record the conversation between researchers and participants. To ensure that the researchers would not miss some rich information, two of the researchers took notes during the interview in case some important both verbal communications and non-verbal communications were displayed.

6) Exploring field issues, the researchers tried to predict and solve possible obstacles and challenges which may have happened during the interviews.

7) Storing data, the researchers backed up the interviews on the personal computer and uploading them into Google drive with complicated password security to make sure that the data would not lose and safe.

Data Analysis

The phenomenological map is not antithetical to the mainstream natural science map, but it marks different features of the terrain. It locates geological features of human awareness and reminds us that the research journey needs to attend to the configurations of experience before moving on to assumptions about independent natural objects. (Polkinghorne, 1989) The suggestions for narrative analysis present a general template for qualitative researchers of phenomenology; there has been a specific structured method of analysis that was suggested by Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen (Moustakas, 1994). Could be seen when Johnson and Christensen claim that "the data analysis approach starts from a list of significant statements, determine the meaning of statements, and identify the essence of the phenomenon" (2004, p. 361).

Trustworthiness

Given (2016) moreover added that "...Trustworthiness in qualitative research is achieved by designing and implementing projects that are credible, dependable, and confirmable so that the findings may be transferable across populations, settings, or contexts" (p. 76). In order to provide a different set for criteria that can be used for ascertaining the quality, Lincoln & Guba (1985) created a corresponding set of criteria for the trustworthiness of qualitative research:

1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability, and 4) confirmability. To make sure good practices abide by quality standards in qualitative research, the researchers applied four major qualitative trustworthiness criteria which consisted of; 1) ensuring participants willingness to take part in the project and acknowledge their right to withdraw from the study, 2) getting participants to verify the correctness of their given information, 3) using theoretical techniques to obtain sufficient data, 4) provide detail information explaining how the study conducted, 5) presenting finding revealing similar outcomes shown in previous related studies, 6) using different types of interview question to assure the correctness of answers given by participants, and 7) including verbatim in the final report to present voices of participants.

Ethical Considerations in Qualitative Study

“...the protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in all research study. In a qualitative study, ethical considerations have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process (Arifin, 2018, p. 1).”

1) Interview Session

Each interview was conducted individually in a private room in the Third Age University of Chiang Rai without access by outsiders. The researchers are the only one who should be able to match the identity of the participants and voice recordings.

2) Data Protection

Data analysis was conducted concurrently with the data collection. The researchers transcribed and analyzed the data and shared with three qualitative researchers through password protected email. Data were stored in coded devices and password protected.

3) Ethical Approval

The ethical approval was approved from two main research ethics committees: The Research and Development Institute (RDI) in the Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Research and Academic Service Committee (RAS) in Faculty of Management Science Chiang Rai Rajabhat University.

Results

The finding showed that there were several factors that help the university run effectively which are the following:

1) Emphasizing on the happiness of both employees and students. This refers to a happy body, happy heart, happy relax, happy brain, happy soul, happy money, happy family, and a happy society. The elderly may face with illness and physical weakness according to getting old age. However, the university did not rest and focused on the health care of their students and staffs by providing health experts from the Medical Division Chiang Rai Municipality Office for consultation toward the elderly health care. The U3A also organized activities to promote good health such as opening a holistic health care center. The holistic health care center is combining tourism and good health together, the students could learn Thai history and gaining knowledge about health care at the same time. Third Aged university, Chiang Rai Municipality is strongly believed that being generous is the most necessary thing. The coexistence of the parties involved good relationship and generous, caring for each other by having a classroom life together, doing group discussion activities, exchange knowledge and ideas to each other, including food sharing then staffs and students are very happy to live together.

2) Creating self-awareness, aging is at once a biological, psychological, and social phenomenon. It is a universal feature of human life. Aging may lead the elderly to be frighteningly and worry, then creating self-awareness is very helpful and necessary. The self-aware individual is a conscious individual. The purpose of the university is to create a better life in the others hands the elderly would systematically fall victim to their own lack of awareness and to the ramifications that such a state begets. Some of the ramifications include confusion due to a lack of intent behind decision-making, frustration due to a lack of understanding of why certain calamities eventuate in their lives. The university provides self-awareness activities for

their students and staffs which included: 1) personality test means let them observe themselves towards the patterns of behavior and personality type and discuss between friends, staffs and teachers, 2) the teacher always ask "what's most important to you" then the students would become aware of personal values and could evaluate if they are spending time and living in accord with them, and 3) Let's them talk about themselves in public, most elderly would happy to share some wisdom and ideas.

3) Utilizing the management model to manage the institute by a focus on 4Ms model which included man, money, material, and management.

4) Having a good interaction between lecturers, officers, executive, and students and working as a team.

5) Having respect and good authority, Thai culture has its own very explicit way of honoring elders and showing respect towards elderly friends and relatives. Thai people believed that "Wai and humble" are both a duty and the basis of good manners. There are a lot of elders working as the executive and staff, all of the students are elderly. Respect to each other in a hierarchy is very important in this institute, the humble speech and beautiful tone of voice are crucial as a rule that everyone in the university must practice. Even if you are a teacher but your student is older than you then you need to respect to older students.

6) Having respect for the rules, the University always aware of the rules and regulations. When used appropriately, rules provide a sense of predictability and consistency for students, thereby promoting physical and emotional safety. Rules help guide actions toward desired results. The institute Prioritized and established a few rules that are the most important. An important thing that the University always mentions is we need to make sure the rules are clear, and that they address what they are intended to address. If they do not, brainstorm together how they can be clarified or changed, then exceptions to the rules (such as if safety needs to come first). Making the rules positive and action-oriented, this is the most effectiveness.

7) Having a public mind, the public mind is important for all humanity who live together. It makes people increasing sacrifice and lead to happy together. The University setting up a lot of activities to promote the public mind such as charity dance, temple yard cleaning, and grocery sales for charity. From the result of satisfaction assessment toward activities found that all of students and staffs are happy and proud of themselves, most of them willing to continue doing this kind of activity.

8) Having stability of tenure of personnel, this factor is the highlight of human resource management. The University very care about the staffs mental and feeling, even if some of the staffs are project's employee who had contract annually in their hands but all of them would have a chance to renew the contract and also have a chance to take the examination as a permanent employee who works as the government officers under the supervision of Chiang Rai Municipality.

9) Providing courses which meet the needs of the students who are elderly as following:

9.1 Religious courses focus on the study of rituals and artifacts used in the inauspicious events.

9.2 Art and culture courses, studying about native music subjects, when elderly dance they would receive both knowledge and have fun. Furthermore, the institute also allows students to perform on various stages then the students would proud and happy.

9.3 Environmental courses are focused on learning about the environment which connects to human life and health, this course would help elderly learn about environmental protection and practice to be a part in creating a good environment.

9.4 Tourism courses are a study of historical tourism. The knowledge gained from this course are both enjoyment and learning about Thai culture and This history. The elderly can bring knowledge to be published discuss with family members and other people. This is a starting point for creating good relationships and creating pride for themselves.

9.5 Technology and communication courses, this course the students would learn about how to use a computer in basic, basic English communication and basic Chinese communication. This course has received great attention from the elderly because various technologies change and occur quickly in addition, English and Chinese are also recognized by many countries.

9.6 Social and happiness courses composed of line dance, dancing, and standard dance band courses. Those activities would make students happy and enjoyable, healthy and have strong interactions with their friends and teachers. They would proud of being part of the art keeper.

9.7 Health courses contained Third Age Health subject and Yoga for Mental Development subject. Health problems are an important problem that hinders the daily life of the elderly, it causes an accident such as falling, skidding, etc. There were a lot of health problems in Thailand, whether it is deterioration of the body and this problem tend to be higher continuously according to getting higher age. Thus, the health programs are therefore very necessary in the institution. The health programs focused on safe-care, preliminary behaviors when diseases or accidents occur. Yoga could improve health, gives mental strength, improves physical strength, protects from injury, and detoxifies the body.

9.8 Economic courses are not aimed to know the advance economic world but aim to bring the understanding in the household economy. Including basic accounting principles, savings principles, and sufficiency economy philosophy. The university believe that after utilizing the knowledge gained, they would be able to solve problems and reduce financial problems and stress from the economic management in the household.

10) Having good advertising and good relationship among alumni, the third age university not only advertised their institute's performance in order to gain more students through alumni but also post the advertisement on social media. Even social media is the popular platform in the digital era but for the elderly, in Thailand, this seems that it is not the best channel for advertising. The University survey found that the new generation students apply to study because they receive guidance from senior students. This could confirm that the strong

relationship between students and teachers, students and students is very important for the institute.

11) Interdisciplinary cooperation, the university would not be run effortlessly without the cooperation of other section included other university and government sectors. The main institution that supports the University of Third Aged Chiang Rai is Chiang Rai Municipality, Division of Medical, Ministry of Public Health, Chiang Rai Rajabhat University, Srinakharinwirot University, Phayao University, and Community philosopher.

12) Giving the Wisdom Certificate or “Pun Ya Batt” after finished eight courses is a pride of the students. Pun Ya Batt is a value creation with positive reinforcement for the elderly. We would not deny that in Thai society certificate is a popular reason for graduation. In addition to the knowledge gained from studying certificate affected the pride and feelings of both the learners and their relatives. Thus, Pun Ya Batt is the main objectives of attending the U3A, it is a motivation of the elderly who study at the U3A, Chiang Rai Municipality to be diligent. Eighty percent of the students have tried to complete the courses according to the curriculum set by the institution. The criteria for giving a certificate defined that a student needs to enroll all eight curriculums and each curriculum need to study at least one subject.

Discussion

“Population aging refers to changes in the age composition of a population such that there is an increase in the proportion of older persons (Land and Lamb, 2017, p. 2).” The most obvious of these is the rapidly increasing population of older people, the majority of whom are living longer and in better health than earlier cohorts. Less obvious, but probably no less important, is the steadily increasing levels of formal education amongst the older population; prior education has consistently been shown to be the single best predictor of future participation in adult education. U3A would be a factor which helps the world passing the aged era. The U3A of Chiang Rai applied the philosophy in the courses of the university such as religious courses, art and culture courses, environmental courses, social and happiness courses, and health courses. The study of philosophy in the Western world has been around a long time. It is generally accepted that it began with Socrates and his pupil Plato, and Aristotle about 400BC. For these early Greeks “philosophy” meant “love of wisdom” and they considered wisdom to be of everyday importance: it provided knowledge or understanding of the right way to live and why it is the right way. And while philosophy has changed a lot since the days of classical Athens, today’s philosophers still grapple with many of the same kinds of questions; questions such as:

“How do we tell which actions are right or wrong?”

What is the nature of the mind?

How do good arguments differ from bad arguments?

What is knowledge?

How does science work?

What is freedom?

Am I free?

Is there a God?

What is a beauty?

What is art? (Thompson, 2016, p. 1).”

Many U3As conduct philosophy courses and for most participants in them, it is their first exposure to the subject. For many, it is a time of life when thinking about questions such as those above is very satisfying. Most find philosophy improves reasoning and logic skills, particularly when learning in a positive social environment. Philosophy encourages habits of rigors, of constructive doubt, and of clear thinking. It is an ideal subject for a U3A course.

The U3A of Chiang Rai always attention about the happiness of people, not only the staffs, teachers, and students but also students’ family. The notion of happiness at work is becoming increasingly important for human resource management research. Despite the widespread existence of different constructs that capture positive attitudes, a comprehensive measure of individual-level happiness is necessary. This support by Vallina and Alegre (2018, p. 1) who studied on the topic “Happiness at Work: Developing a Shorter Measure”. They developed 31-item scales to measure happiness at work. The finding found that the employee would happy when they could show their performance and work among generous colleagues. According to the finding of this research could summarize that the U3A of Chiang Rai running in a direct way which could help their university organize effectively by focusing on the happiness of people and having the strong relationship between staffs and students, students and executive committees, and executive committees and staffs. Another support is suggested Chawsithiwong (2007, pp. 1-2) claimed that “...a feeling of happiness derived from work becomes a very important factor of environment and safety management in a company. Investment in a happy workplace program is profitable. Happy at work is crucial both to the employee and the company. Happy people and the happy company can create a lot of good things such as increasing productivity, quality, sales, customer satisfaction, creativity, innovation, adaptation, flexibility, and decreasing loss, absenteeism, the stress of workers, accidents and occupational diseases”. Many ideas to make a happy workplace have been presented in this article which can be applied to various types of businesses.

Conclusion

The study implicates a qualitative research approach, strategy which was phenomenological. This study was conducted with both 10 executive boards and leaders of students from each course who were working and studying in Third Age University Chiang Rai province, Thailand. The participants were asked by an in-depth interview about their experience and challenges in managing the university. They were interviewed by synthesized questions which summarized the tricks and management styles as an in-depth interview to gather ideas in enhancing the elderly education management official’s plan to be successful. This study was conducted with ethical principles required by Chiang Rai Ratchabhat University which included a consent form, freedom of cancellation, informant feedback and also reflexivity. Computer programs such as Microsoft Word, Atlasti, Google Drive and email were used for data analyzing, storing and backing up. The finding of the study shown that the U3A of Chiang Rai have strong organizational culture. All students, teachers, and executive committee were blended by Thai culture. There are many dynamics that could help the University run their institute effectively. Cooperation is the most important cause of this organization's success. The U3A of Chiang Rai focused on the “stability” even outside the university is changing or having a lot of competition but inside the university always promise to love and care for each other. Not only the stability of relationships but also stability management, the management of the university should ensure that

there must be stability in the job and frequent changes and shuffling of the position should be avoided.

Recommendations

- 1) It should be noted that qualitative research results could be not generalized to other types of universities.
- 2) The main advantage of U3A as university branches or collaborating between universities is that they could benefit from the lectures, classroom management, and other facilities. Therefore, in the case of interested in establishing a U3A (University of Third Age) should ask for cooperation from other universities.
- 3) Culture and traditions, beliefs, and faith of students who are all people living in the north of Thailand, considered as a factor affecting the operations of the university operations or even various activities. Therefore, to establish the new U3A the developer should study the needs of the learners to set suitable courses and activities in the university.
- 4) The future research should consider the following related topics: maintaining and transferring knowledge of the elderly, integration between the elderly and adolescents in any areas, and standardized management of Universities of Third Age in other regions.

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