EDUCATION FOR SENIOR CITIZENS IN CHINA:
POLICIES, PRACTICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING FOR ALL

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Outline of the Presentation

- Background
- Policies on the aging population of China
- Practices of lifelong learning for senior citizens
- Concept of “Learning Villages and Rural Learning Communities”
Source: Sixth National Population Census Database, National Bureau of Statistics of P.R.China, 2010

Age group 60 and above: 177 million (13.26 per cent)
Challenges

- the largest number of the aging population: the only country with more than 100 million elderly people

- rapid increase in the number of senior citizens in coming decades:
  - 288 million in 2025
  - 480 million in 2050

- China’s population to age at one of the fastest rates ever recorded:
  - 10.2% in 2000
  - 19.7% in 2025
  - 31% in 2050
Aging Population Policies of China

Education

- an important investment to develop human resources
- a problem solver to tackle the issue of population aging
China National Working Commission on Ageing

- established in 1982
- primary responsibilities: to evaluate ageing policies and to liaise with related government and non-government departments for the implementation of elderly services within the country.
- numerous local-level branch committees: to supervise the development and implementation of elderly services, including elderly education at street, district and city levels
Aging Population Policies of China

Education
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Regulations for Protecting Rights of the Elderly

- Older persons have the right to receive continuing education (Article 31)

- Older persons’ strength and expertise should be developed (Article 40)

- According to the societal needs and possibility, older persons should be encouraged to perform activities within their capacity and willingness (Article 41)
to give priority to education and to enhance citizens’ overall quality and boost educational development in a scientific way

The education for the aged population shall be emphasized on (Article 23)

Individuals shall be encouraged to receive further education in various forms (Article 24)

Community education organizations and networks shall be improved in urban and rural areas (Article 25)
to set up a national steering commission to study and formulate the Outline of China’s National Plan for Senior Citizen Education Development (2015-2020)

to publicize the Guideline on Advancing Community Education Reform and Development to guide pilot programs of community education for the elderly
Lifelong Learning for the Third Age

- Academic courses
  - School for the Third Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of S3A</th>
<th>Number of enrolled students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>30,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>54,000</td>
<td>6,920,000</td>
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- Elderly schools in China are divided into different levels, i.e. city, district, county and council.
- There are also street-level elderly learning centres.
Leisure and physical courses and activities
- to help extend senior citizens’ interests and keep them as fit as possible
- Elderly Activity Platform, to perform self-organized activities or to join programmes provided by street-/district-level communities
Technology and Older Learners
SEE YOUNG
Elder Technology Assistance Project

May 2011

community-based

13 college volunteers

free technology education & support to senior citizens

overcome the challenges of modern technologies
CASE 1: SEE YOUNG

Needs of the elderly

- communication & companion
- social participation
- emotional care & support

Activities

- computer courses:
  - CLC-based activity
  - One-on-one teaching
- recreational activities:
  - Birthday party
  - Competitive sports, singing, calligraphy, etc
- intergenerational solidarity:
  - Mutual respect & cooperation
  - Informal supporting network
**CASE 1: SEE YOUNG**

- **Coverage**: Over 20 communities in mainland China (Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou, etc).
- **Volunteers**: Over 1000 volunteers have joined the program.
- **Target group**: Have served more than 5000 senior citizens.
- **Replicability**: Have been introduced to 20 other colleges and universities.
- **Impact**: Have become a charity brand and participated in a senior assistance project of the MOE.
CASE 1: SEE YOUNG

Hundreds of millions of adults need education, not only for the pleasure of perfecting their capacities or contributing to their own development, as before, but because the demands for over-all social, economic and cultural development of twentieth-century societies require the maximum potential of an educated citizenry.

-- Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow, Faure et al, 1972, p.142

Elderly could serve the community

- lifelong learning is taken as a means to enhance senior citizens’ adaptability, reduce their dependency, and thus improve the quality of their life
- equal emphasis is put on senior citizens’ contribution to society.
Dream-Knitting Team of SEE YOUNG

HENG YUAN XIANG (a wool company)
In line with the rapid technological development, colleges and universities have also started to make use of advanced technology in their services for senior citizens.
CASE 2: OPEN UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

- Founded in January 2015 with the joint effort of the Open University of China (OUC), Office of China National Working Commission on Aging, China Association of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, and China Employment Training Technical Instruction Center of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security

- 204 Free online courses (http://www.lndx.edu.cn/): courses accompanied by provision for social interaction are much more welcomed → Chinese culture, calligraphy and painting, elderly health and disease prevention, nutrition and diet for the elderly, family financial management, etc.

- To promote the formation of a learning society where learning is available to anyone, anytime and anywhere, and to gather quality educational resources from all sectors of society
CASE 2: OPEN UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

- Supported by the operating system of OUC
- Resource optimization: OUC system, U3A system & CLCs

OUC is a national open university that covers both urban and rural areas. OUC has developed a complete teaching and management system consisting of headquarters, branches, CLCs, etc.
CASE 2: OPEN UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

- Curriculum design
  - *Usefulness* is the underlying concern.
  - Special attention is given to the physical and psychological characteristics of the elderly, and the limitation of local CLC resources.

- Advantages of multi-level system
  - Local resources including teaching assistant staff and venue can easily be used.
  - Courses provided can better fit the needs of local older persons.
  - Courses are offered nearby and this reduces older persons’ inconvenience of traveling a long distance to attend classes.
LEARNING CITIES
Lifelong Learning for All: Inclusion, Prosperity and Sustainability in Cities

- Held in 2013 in Beijing, China

- Framework – an attempt to translate the aspiration of learning society into reality

  ✓ Wider benefits of building a learning city;
  ✓ Major building blocks of a learning city;
  ✓ Fundamental conditions for building a learning city.
A big number of senior citizens in rural areas (57.13 per cent)

New challenges are emerging: youth drain of rural areas → the ageing of rural labor and a decline in the dynamism of rural development

Self-motivated and needs-based learning activities bring about positive changes at the individual and family level and also in the broader community

The Global Meeting on Education for All pledged to “ensure equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for all by 2030,” in the final statement of the conference held in Muscat (Oman), 2014.
A Learning Village is:

A rural community where every rural resident, regardless of age, sexual identity, race, religion and social status, has a willingness and an opportunity to be continuously empowered through knowledge acquisition, skills development, and values and attitudes cultivation, as per each learner’s immediate and long-term learning needs, for the betterment of individuals and their community.

A rural learning community:

Comprises a group of rural people who share common learning needs and are actively engaged in learning together and from each other.
China’s population is aging

Government’s commitment and support to elderly education policies

Community-based lifelong learning: two-way interaction

Lifelong learning for all: with a rural perspective
Thank You

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