STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADULT EDUCATION AS THE NEXUS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION IN PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Yvonne P. Velasco
Languages Department, College of Arts and Sciences
Carlos Hilado Memorial State University, Philippines
(yvonne.velasco@chmsu.edu.ph)
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Abstract

This study uses the Kirkpatrick Model for Evaluation as a framework to analyse the perceptions of adult learners and teachers of Program Objectives/Goals and Program Outcomes, Faculty, Curriculum, Instructional Materials, Procedures and Techniques, Assessment and Evaluation, and Administrative Support and Policies of adult education implementation in Philippine higher education institutions. Likely, the first study of its kind to measure large-scale and in-depth perceptions of the current adult education program implementation in higher education in the Philippines, the study used mixed methods: a survey and qualitative data from FGDs and interviews. The study found generally positive perceptions, with mild distributions of perceptions of program vulnerabilities.

Keywords: adult education, perceptions, Kirkpatrick model, program strengths/vulnerabilities

Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 envisions "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and *promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*." [italics supplied] (United Nations, 2022) As early as 2009, the Philippines was recognised as one of the Southeast Asian countries that overcame large-scale adult illiteracy through different literacy strategies (*2nd Global Report*, 2013).

While several studies are done in the Philippines on lifelong learning, alternative learning system, and non-formal education in general, there seems to be a lack of studies that deal with or are solely focused on Adult Education. This study presents how Philippine HEIs are currently implementing their Adult Education program to address such a gap; hence, current practices. It is worth noting that this reflects the status of Adult Education in the Philippines, considering that this is a large-scale study of the first kind.

The Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED) has two roles: regulatory and developmental. A review of its policies from 2016 – 2017 reveals that CHED has performed more of its developmental role than its regulatory role (Malolos & Tullao, 2018). Developmental roles of National Government Agencies are invaluable in ensuring that Adult Education can adapt and evolve to address spontaneous changes. One such change was COVID-19. The British Association for Literacy in Development (2020, p. 33) has reported that:

> … efforts have been exerted to provide different forms of support to ALS learners and instructional managers through DepEd divisions, LGU officials, and instructional managers to alleviate the challenges brought about by the pandemic. The financial support given, however, was found to be inadequate both by the IMs and learners.

In the 2nd Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) (English, 2013), the Philippines used only 0.21% of its education budget for Adult Education. However, significant developments have happened since then.

The 5th GRALE (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2022) reported that the Philippines had implemented entirely new teaching standards for Adult Learning and Education educators, hinting at better financing. Additionally, the Department of Education adopted and implemented the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) based on the principle of lifelong learning.

Tasçı and Titrek (2019) found that the needs of the university shape the managers of lifelong learning centres using internal and external connections. Evidence from Abbott, Lee, and Rossiter (2018) suggests that researchers and program administrators can better bridge the gap between research and practice when they support teachers. Epstein and Sheldon (2019) posited that evaluations are essential if any institution wants to improve its programs.

These studies show that evolving needs should shape the response of academic institutions such that they tailor their programs to address those demands. Internal and external factors must be periodically examined to adapt to those demands. Such examination is possible by evaluating the perceptions of the

primary stakeholders, the adult learners, and the teachers who provide them with instruction and mentoring.

Theoretical Framework

The current study uses the Kirkpatrick model for evaluation, particularly level 1 or Reaction. Originally this theory was used to evaluate corporate training, but it has since been applied to academic settings as well (Cahapay, 2021) The evaluation techniques were adapted for perception as it similarly involves a response to external stimuli, which is, in this case, implementing the adult education program in Philippine higher education institutions.

Adapting Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006), evaluating perception measures the adult learners' and teachers' satisfaction, and if they are happy with the program, they will tell others about it. In this study, the external clientele is the adult learners, and the internal clientele is the teachers. The goal is to evaluate their overall satisfaction and engagement (Peck, 2020) with the existing adult education programs.

Using Kirkpatrick as the theoretical lens, this study designed a survey instrument that quantified the adult learners' and teachers' perceptions and developed acceptable standards on a five-point scale to measure perceptions. The standards were:

4.21 – 5.00 = Very Extensively Applied
3.41 – 4.20 = Extensively Applied
2.64 – 3.40 = Moderately Applied
1.81 – 2.60 = Limitedly Applied
1.00 – 1.80 = Very Limitedly Applied

Using Level 1 of Kirkpatrick's Model, this investigation evaluated current practices in adult education in higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines and undertook to answer the following questions:

1. What are the adult learners' and faculty' perceptions of the current practices in adult education in HEIs in terms of:
2.
    a. program objectives and program outcomes
    b. faculty
    c. curriculum
    d. instructional materials, procedures, and techniques
    e. assessment and evaluation

> f. administrative support and policies
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the adult education program from the teacher/administrator/student perceptions?

Methodology

Research Design
This study uses a mixed-method research design, which relies on both forms of inquiry instead of just solely on either quantitative or qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), it utilised survey research and focus group discussions, the transcripts of which were later subjected to thematic analysis.

Participants
Participants represented practically all the regions of the Philippines, broken down as respondent adult learners number 19,515, while respondent teachers/administrators number 1,528.

Age
2,603 (13%) adult learners were aged 19 and below. 7,005 (36%) were aged 20-24 years old. 3,301 (17%) were 25-29 years old, while 3,272 (17%) were 30-34. On the other hand, 1,839 (9%) were aged 35-39 years old. Finally, only 1,495 (8%) were aged 40 and above.

366 (24%) of the teachers were aged 21-25, while 127 (8%) were aged 26-30. 322 (21%) were aged 31-35 years old. 230 (15%) were aged 36-40 years old. Meanwhile, 130 (9%) were aged 41-45. 122 (8%) were aged 46-50 years old. 102 (7%) were aged 51-55, and 75 (5%) were 56-60. Lastly, 54 (4%) were 61 years old and above.

Sex
11,819 (61%) of the adult learners were female, while 7,696 (39%) were male. Meanwhile, 1,029 (67%) of the teachers were female, and 499 (33%) were male.

Civil Status
14,411 (74%) of the adult learners were single, while 4,960 (25%) were married. 107 (1%) were widowed, and 37 (0.002%) were separated. On the other hand, 28 (2%) of the teachers were separated, while 764 (50%) were married. 730 (48%) were still single, and only 6 (0.004%) were widowed.

Religion

Regarding religion, an overwhelming majority of the adult learners were Roman Catholics, at 15,250 (78%). 1,773 (9%) were Born-again Christians, and 875 (4%) were Iglesia ni Cristo. 426 (2%) were Protestants, while 249 (1.3%) were Baptists. 187 (0.96%) were Seventh Day Adventists. On the other hand, 109 (0.56%) were adherents of Islam, and 138 (0.71%) were Aglipay or members of Iglesia Filipina Independiente. 68 (0.35%) were Jehovah's Witnesses. Finally, 440 (2%) belonged to other religions not named herein.

881 (58%) of the teachers were Roman Catholics, whereas 278 (18%) were Born-again Christians. 199 (13%) were Iglesia ni Cristo members. 78 (5%) were Protestants, and 23 (2%) were Iglesia Filipina Independiente or Aglipay members. There were 56 (4%) Seventh Day Adventists. Meanwhile, there were 13 (1%) adherents of other religions (e.g., Islam, Jehovah's Witnesses, Non-denominational/Secular Humanist, Baptist Christian).

Adult Education Program Duration

When grouped according to the duration of the Adult Education Program in which they enrolled, 13,467 (or 69%) of the adult learners attended long-term (1 year or more) programs. In contrast, 6,048 (or 31%) attended only short-term (Weeks to 11 months only) programs. This measure is only applied to adult learners.

HEI Location

When classified according to the location of the HEI where they enrolled, 6,065 (or 31%) of the adult learners attended an HEI in a rural area. In contrast, 12,636 (or 65%) attended an HEI in an urban setting. Finally, 814 (or 4%) attended in a hybrid Rurban area.

Meanwhile, regarding the HEI location where they taught Adult Education, 337 (or 22%) of the teachers were in rural areas, whereas 87 (or 6%) were in hybrid rurban settings. In contrast, 1104 (or 72%) were located in urban areas.

Data Collection

The primary data gathering method used for this study was survey research, which facilitates quantitative inference-making about the two groups of respondents and their perceptions (Portus, Barrios, Conaco, & Go, 2018).

A questionnaire was developed using standard protocols that comply with ethical and technical standards. The respondents rated each item from 1 as the

lowest and five as the highest. Consequently, the mean and standard deviation (σ) were computed to see how closely packed or far apart the responses were.

The respondents were later engaged in a focus group discussion (FGD) and interviews, method for generating data from a small selection of knowledgeable respondents for a limited amount of time through unstructured and generally open-ended questions intended to elicit views and opinions from the respondents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Subsequently, the FGDs and interviews were transcribed, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the generated data. Familiarisation was done by immersing in the dataset through active reading with initial notes. Coding was performed next by systematising the notes and labelling relevant data segments. Theme development followed where patterns across data were sought and identified (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). Reviewing and defining the themes ensued, with the rigorous iteration of the transcripts by inter-coders. Finally, the qualitative portion of this study was produced.

Triangulation of the survey results and thematic analysis of the FGD/interviews were then conducted to corroborate the quantitative results to better understand the respondents' answers (Willig, 2013). The survey results formed the corpus of quantitative data, and the FGD/interviews form the study's qualitative data.

Findings and Discussions

Adult learners' and administrators' or teachers' perceptions of Adult Education in HEIs

Objectives and Program Outcomes

This dimension measured perceptions of vision, mission, goals, and objectives and how they translate into competencies and outcomes. The average mean for the adult learners for all items for this dimension was 4.40 with a low σ of 0.522, and the average for the teachers was 4.16 with a low σ of 0.704. Generally, the adult learners' perceptions of this dimension were that they were *Very Extensively Applied*, whereas, for the teachers, they were only *Extensively Applied*. One adult learner stated:

> They're very accommodating, and every time I have questions, they send everything: the scoring criteria, the lessons' objectives, and what we should do.

On the other hand, a teacher who rated this dimension somewhat lower on the scale disclosed:

> And so, other initiatives by the college will more likely be felt, especially when we are a university where we need to reach out more to the outside community and other stakeholders.

The adult learners' and teachers' average means closely correspond with the FGD results. However, it is to be noted how the teacher's statement reflects only *Extensively Applied* by implying the need to improve through words like "more likely be felt" and "reach out more".

Faculty

This dimension measured perceptions of faculty members' academic qualifications and training experiences and their policies and classroom management. The adult learners' average mean for this dimension was 4.54, with a low σ of 0.523. On the other hand, the teachers' average mean was 4.21, with a low σ of 0.669. Generally, both groups perceived the items as *Very Extensively Applied* in their adult education experiences. To illustrate the perceptions on this dimension, one of the adult learners said:

> Some faculty here are either doctorate or masters, but throughout the journey of graduate school, you can learn from each other. For the learnings, they also give you the opportunity to stand out, despite some of the teachers being established.

> Further, a teacher added:

> They (graduates) would market our graduate studies programs and continuing education because of the teacher's excellence, too, I guess... That's really what they call academic excellence, as they say.

Curriculum

This dimension measured perceptions of curriculum design vis-à-vis career and licensure preparations. The adult learners' average mean for this dimension was 4.45 with a low σ of 0.500, and that for the teachers was 4.27 with a low σ of 0.700. Generally, all items were perceived to be *Very Extensively Applied*. To demonstrate this rating, an adult learner shared:

I think extension programs. Sometimes our courses will integrate communities just like for example if it's more on research, we try to adapt the research output or the projects that we'll be making in the community.

Meanwhile, a teacher also stated:

'Cause the participation of adults still seems minimal. Since we are already a university, we could offer some special skills, like some short-term courses that cater to their interests.

The adult learners' and teachers' average means state that this dimension is *Very Extensively Applied*, and it closely resembles their statements that their curriculum *"integrates communities"*. However, the teachers' rating of *Very Extensively Applied* was somewhat contradicted by the dissatisfaction that adult participation still *"seems minimal"*.

Instructional Materials, Procedures, and Techniques

This dimension measured perceptions of the delivery of instruction, as well as tools and methods used. The adult learners' average mean was 4.41, with a low σ of 0.527, and the teachers' average mean was 4.25, with a low σ of 0.635. Generally, both groups perceived all the items in their surveys to be *Very Extensively Applied*. One of the adult learners shared:

So, when I enrolled in the teacher certificate program, I said, "Oh okay, so there are strategies and processes like these apparently". So little by little I incorporated them. There is really an improvement I can say when it comes to the way I explain, and the way I discuss something in lessons indeed.

One of the teachers said:

Well, before some are working, they have some limitations, and some are not, I should say English majors, but the medium of instruction is English, so I see that although a lot of students are not that excellent in communication skills, I see their expertise in their fields. And that's the beauty of it.

Assessment and Evaluation

This dimension measured perceptions of course content and their relation to test administration and performance tasks. The adult learners' average mean was 4.42 with a low σ of 0.525, and the teachers' average mean was 4.16 with a low σ of 0.698. The adult learners' perceptions generally reflect that the items are *Very Extensively Applied*. However, for the teachers, it was only *Extensively Applied*. An adult learner elaborated:

> In graduate school, especially on the first day of class, the teacher is always telling you about the class's rules and guidelines and the mechanics of how the students get their grades.

One of the teachers explained:

> It's more like an evaluation. For example, if you already have experience or would like to pursue a degree, it's really important to know their interests. So, for example, in Business / Education, they will be given options, and we will guide them based on their experiences.

The adult learners' average mean rated this dimension as *Very Extensively Applied*, but the teachers rated it as only *Extensively Applied*. This was closely reflected by the adult learner saying that teachers are "always telling you about the rules and guidelines". However, the lower average mean of the teachers is contradicted by the FGD where one elaborates that "we give them choices, if you do this, then this would be the outcome, if you do the other one, this is what it would be". It appears as though the statement is leaning towards the descriptive rating of *Very Extensively Applied*.

Administrative Support and Policies

This dimension measured perceptions of consultative mechanisms and all-around support of school heads to stakeholders. The adult learners' average mean was 4.39, with a low σ of 0.555, while the teachers' average mean was 4.16, with a low σ of 0.742. These results indicate that the adult learners generally found the items *Very Extensively Applied*. Still, the resulting average mean was lower for the teachers who perceived the items to be only *Extensively Applied*. An adult learner shared:

Talking about procedures and policies in the University, our planning and quality assurance office has always been ensuring the sustainability of the programs and services, and I think our graduate school has policies and procedures.

To show what the teachers mean, here is what one teacher said:

I think one of the things that can be offered is if there is something flexible and policies, specific policies that will have to be formulated to address their needs. 'Because I have one student whom I believe earns hundreds of thousands working as an agent in the United States. It's an online job, but her problem is, I told her how can I excuse you because from the policy of this school if I excuse you all the time you should work at night and during our class, you will, of course, be sleeping…

The adult learners rated Administrative Support and Policies as *Very Extensively Applied*. In contrast, the teachers rated it as only *Extensively Applied*. The adult learner closely reflects this describing their school as "very systematic when it comes to this kind of aspect of adult education". The teacher also confirms why the rating is only *Extensively Applied*, saying that "there is something flexible and policies, specific policies that will have to be formulated to address their needs". She implies that certain improvements must be made.

The qualitative statements confirmed Almost every numeric data except for two instances. For Curriculum, the teachers' rating of *Very Extensively Applied* was somewhat contradicted by the qualitative data. One of the teachers elaborated:

As a provider myself—the concept of adult education—I feel like there's a lot to do to provide them with various alternatives 'cause sometimes you're just too focused on the syllabus that you need to finish. Yes, you can somewhat elaborate, but especially during the pandemic, there's just something missing.

In contrast, for Assessment and Evaluation, the teachers' rating of only *Extensively Applied* was contradicted by a comment bordering on the higher descriptive rating. For instance, here is what one teacher stated:

Some of them are still unavailable, even if we do it online. They have an operation on that day. So, you have to give them another time. Another schedule. We have to consider the availability. And before, actually, I have students from Negros

> *Oriental. I have to travel late at night. Then, I have to meet them at eight o'clock in the morning. And go back to Bacolod at 6 pm. Just only to meet them and help them comply with the requirements.*

Strengths and weaknesses in the adult education programs

Enabling Environment

The qualitative statements show the importance of support from teachers and the school itself for adult learners to succeed in their endeavours. An illustrative comment from a teacher is as follows:

> So, we supported them. Of course, we created an environment that enables students to be encouraged and not regret the decision to resume their education.

> This was corroborated by an adult learner:

> So, my experience before and during is really amazing. Although we're flooded with outputs since it's fast-paced, overall, we can do it. It feels a little like drowning sometimes, but we can still manage with the help of our supportive teachers. We're now working on our thesis, so very busy, but our teachers are going the extra mile to assist us.

> Another adult learner gave an emotional testimony:

> Then I'm also thankful that they help us since it's difficult for us. They really help us, halfway through you feel like giving up—because there was a time when I wanted to give up in the middle of the semester—because it felt like I couldn't do it anymore.

Client-Oriented

Adult education programs are focused on catering to the interests of adult learners. A key theme that emerged is how interest and willingness are crucial in a learner's decision to try short-term or long-term courses. The following statement from a teacher points to this:

So basically, when you invite anybody, anybody can just be qualified. As long as you—the number one qualification is willingness—you need to be willing to do something.

A teacher–administrator also explained:

Actually, Miss, our office—we explained to them—we suggest which program they seem to be well-suited to enrol in. At the end of the day, Miss, the decision still lies with them because we always ask them, "If you are interested. But if your interest is not in that program, don't force yourself just for the sake that you want to earn a degree". It's really important, Miss, that they are interested in that program.

Second Chances

Adult education is truly an opportunity to go back to one's seeming unfinished business in their youth. This theme of going back to fulfil an interrupted dream was seen in several statements, chief of which is the following illustrative text from an adult learner:

Regardless of whatever age, whatever age, let it be 78 we can still go to school. Let it be formal, or informal so you can go to school, and it does not depend on what your age is. Because sometimes others—70 or 80 already—they're already embarrassed to go to school. Adult Education is somewhat open to everybody.

A teacher advanced in years shared:

As for me, I'm nearing old age. Six years from now I will retire. So, for me, I think adult education is like those at TESDA. Because later in my life when I retire, I would like to teach in the skills program. So that is my perception about adult education after my retirement. I'm really interested in that.

Barriers to break

In the FGD and interviews, participants have expressed that the orthodoxy of the adult education program is self-imposed. For instance, it has yet to address night workers who wish to pursue further learning but have to sleep in the daytime. They also noted the informal sector, where adult learners may be skilled but

cannot avail of or teach in adult education because of their non-professional nature. Another comment was the obligation to pay tuition all at once. A teacher made this poignant statement:

> We tend to marginalise ourselves, who make the programs; we create the barrier. What if the person wants to teach his/her skills but has no way of professionalising or developing and no way of rendering their expertise right?

Another teacher spoke about pecuniary challenges:

> The problem of our last scholar students was the tuition fee. Although it's a minimal tuition fee, Ma'am, it's a one-time big-time payment here. If your tuition assessment is 5000, your payment should be the full 5000, which is burdensome for our students. You really have to pay your tuition fee in full.

Education for the rich

An interesting theme was how Adult Education in the Philippines tends to be for the wealthy. The short courses and hobbies that adult learners may want to pursue just for fun are costly and receive no funding from the government or private institutions regularly. They are sourced from the students' pockets, making it seem like the rich have the greatest chance to avail of these programs for personal development and not necessarily work promotion. One of the teachers explained:

> So, when you say "Adult Education", whatever my career is, I could shift without getting questioned, "Why did you take this one?" Like what if I want to learn photography just because? Do you need to ask "What's your background?" No, supposedly no. Just because. I just want to. I have the money. I can pay. Right?

A different teacher recounted:

> Actually, can I add? Normally, in our case, in the ATF program in criminology, one of the barriers is their time schedule. They can afford to pay. They have more knowledge because some of them are pioneers of the program. The only thing is their time.

One student also shared:

(It's) me trying to pursue education which I have decided to let go of in my younger years. So now that I have resources and somehow it can be afforded, then somehow, I decided that it has to be something that I would fulfil in my adult years.

Applying Kirkpatrick's Level 1 evaluation of Reaction as adapted for perception, the adult learners' overall satisfaction and engagement with all six dimensions of this study was within the highest standard or *Very Extensively Applied*. This means they are very happy with how adult education programs are being implemented in all six dimensions. Their statements in the FGDs also confirmed this.

In contrast, the teachers rated only three dimensions with the highest satisfaction and engagement: Faculty, Curriculum, and Instructional Materials, Procedures, and Techniques. They expressed lower satisfaction and engagement in the other three dimensions, rating them as only *Extensively Applied*. These were Program Objectives/Goals and Program Outcomes, Assessment and Evaluation, and Administrative Support and Policies. There were also two instances where the FGD contradicted the teachers' quantitative responses.

In Kirkpatrick's view, the feedback should be acted upon appropriately. The adult learners' overall satisfaction and positive perceptions of their adult education experiences should be sustained.

However, the teachers' overall satisfaction and perceptions should be re-examined so that proper intervention can be made. The occasional incongruence suggests that they are not yet fully satisfied with their role as providers of adult education. This means that some improvements should be developed to make their side of the adult education equation more satisfying and motivating.

Under this theoretical framework, it can also be deduced that work must be done to sustain the strengths culled from the thematic analysis. Adult education was described as an enabling environment, client-oriented, and a giver of second chances to adults who wish to continue learning. Yet it was also discovered to be a source of self-imposed barriers and some exclusivity towards adults who can defray the program's costs.

The results of this study are consistent with Tasçı & Titrek (2019) that internal and external connections shape the university or HEI and help it move forward. They also corroborate Abbott et al. (2018), that suggested how research can help teachers apply theory to praxis. In addition, the results also incline with Epstein & Sheldon (2019), who argued that evaluation is crucial for any

improvement to be made upon existing systems of adult education program implementation.

Finally, the results affirm Assefa (2021) that heeding evaluation results and reports leads to well-grounded and circumspect decision-making in crafting programs. Only when a detailed examination of the parts of a whole has been done can dissemination of reports for providers, funders, and beneficiaries pave the way for understanding and open communication for further improvement and a renewed trajectory for the institution's adult education programs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On the participants, generally
It was observed that the highest number of respondent adult learners were 20-24 years old, female, single, Roman Catholic, and enrolled in long-term courses in urban areas. On the other hand, for the respondent teachers, the highest number was 21-25 years old, female, single, Roman Catholic, and located in urban areas. The majority were still in the youth sector. It can be concluded that most of those who availed of the adult education programs were privileged with time, money, or energy. Thus, interventions could still be made to expand its reach to the less privileged and underserved sectors of adults who may also want to continue learning for life.

On adult learners' perceptions
With the results and application of Kirkpatrick's model for evaluation considered, this study can conclude that the adult education landscape in the Philippines has made some leaps and bounds. The adult learners are generally very satisfied, as they have expressed in their responses. All six dimensions of this study satisfied them as they gave their highest numeric ratings and did not contradict them in the FGDs.

Even with the nuances from different respondents, the FGDs corroborated the overall happiness that adult learners received from their adult education experiences. It can safely be concluded that this study can sustain the existing adult education programs and finetune them for better implementation.

On teachers' perceptions
It can also be concluded that a sizeable number of adjustments must be made to improve the teachers' experiences who perceived three of the six dimensions as one degree lower or less satisfying than how the adult learners perceived them.

Objectives/Goals and Program Outcomes, Assessment and Evaluation, and Administrative Support and Policies must be revisited to determine how to increase teacher satisfaction in these areas to become more motivated.

Most of the statements wishing for a better adult education system are from the teachers' side. Thus, these so-called self-imposed barriers of orthodoxy should also be examined. According to the teachers, a whole sector of night workers still need adult education services but could not fit within the daytime framework.

Some adult learners are skilled in their fields but have no degree and who are also willing to teach their skills to others. Still, there are adult learners who are going back to the undergraduate levels and have differing needs and should also be aided by adult education.

These grey areas outside the scope of existing adult education are a potent site for development, and this study can assist in their exploration for future initiatives.

Data Availability
All data collected and analysed in this study, and those associated with it are available from the author and will be available upon your request.

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